

STORY OF IDOL WORSHIP IN INDIA

(Spirituality to Materiality)



By: Bharat Somal

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Chapter 1

The beginning of Idol Worship and the reasons behind the beginning

It is difficult to say when and where idol worship began in different parts of the world, but as far as India is concerned, all historians and philosophers, Eastern or Western, are of the opinion that it took birth in the Jain-Buddhist era. Hindu Sectarrians might not agree with this opinion, but unbiased independent thinkers are unanimous regarding this subject. Therefore, as far as historical discovery is concerned, the commencement does not fall before the Jain-Buddhist era. Remember that Idols can be found thousands of years back, but it does not mean that idol worship was prevalent from thousands or millions of years as decors can be made at any time since humans came on planet.

The birth of Buddha is said to have taken place 600 years before Christ. Mahavir Swami, the promoter of the Jain religion of today, was a contemporary of Mahatma Buddha. Idol worship does not find any mention in the teachings of Mahatma Buddha. He attained Nirvana at the age of 80. After his death, in his memory, his disciples collected his hair, teeth and bones and made mausoleums on them. It is quite possible that after some time passed these remains begun to be worshipped, as a result of ignorance and delusion. As time passed, idols of Buddha were constructed over these mausoleums and they began to be worshipped all over. It is not unnatural for this development in the idol worship in the Buddhism to have taken a few centuries. It is possible that even Jainism did not have a place for idol worship in the beginning and that too began slowly like in Buddhism. Therefore, the beginning of idol worship is decided to have taken place a few centuries after the birth of Mahatma Buddha.

Idol worship was not prevalent in our country in the pre-Buddhism era, the travel accounts of Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang being the strongest historical evidences for the same. Fa Hien travelled this country in 400 B.C. He says that Buddhism had fully spread in Kabul in those times and there were 500 Buddhist Monasteries. He had seen three thousand Buddhist monks in Mathura and Buddhism was

prevalent over there. All the kings of the Rajputana were followers of Buddhism. He saw monasteries everywhere on which lakhs of rupees had been spent. After visiting all the places, he reached Patna where he saw the idol of Buddha for the first time in the Buddhist associations. He writes:

“On the eighth day of the second month, a procession of the idols is carried out every year. People build a chariot with four wheels on this occasion and decorate it with bamboo embellishments. They place a pole in the center which resembles the trident, is 22 feet or greater in height and looks like a temple. Then they cover it with white velvet and paint it with bright colors. Then idols of gods are made in in gold and silver and decorated with silver, gold and glass and established in silk tents. Notches are made on all four corners of the chariot and all of them have idols of Buddha with a Bodhisattva serving him. Twenty such chariots are built. A lot of celibates and householders gather on this occasion. When they offer flowers and incense sticks instruments are played and acts are performed. The Shramans come for worship. The Buddhists enter the city one by one and stay there. The place is lighted all night. There is music, games, prayers etc.”

He visited Rajgrah, Kashi, Kaushambi and Champa, the capital of Eastern Bihar, from here. But he did not see any Hindu temple at the pilgrimage sites. He saw Buddhist organizations everywhere. He saw 24 of them in Tamarapalli. At the end he left for Sinhala in a ship.

It is clear from the aforementioned description that idol worship was not omnipresent even among the Buddhists at the time when Fa Hien travelled. The countless Hindu gods and goddesses and their temples as they are now had not even come into existence. In this way, the time of Fa Hien's journey can be called as the beginning of the era of non-controversial idol worship.

Hiuen Tsang, another Chinese traveler, came to India around two hundred years after Fa Hien. He came to his country via silk route, Samarkand, and Balkh. This traveler reached India in the year 640.

He found Jalalabad a prosperous city full of Buddhists. He saw five Hindu temples which had 100 worshippers. He saw thousand Buddhist monasteries devastated in Kandahar and Peshawar and a hundred Hindu temples.

He has provided a description of Shiladitya, the king of Malwa, who was the son of Vikramaditya. Vikram had insulted a Buddhist monk names Manotrhit and accused him of partiality but Shiladitya had called him and honored him. The

traveler saw on a hill near the town of Paulush, an idol of goddess Durga made out of blue stone. He saw all, the rich and the poor worshipping this idol. There was a temple of Lord Shiva under the hill where a lot of saints who applied cinder used to reside.

Fa Hien had seen Buddhism at its pinnacle in Kabul and Chaman two hundred years ago, whereas Hiuen Tsang found monasteries uprooted and ten Hindu temples at the same place. He saw Jains worship Mahavir in Takshashila and Kashmir. Kashmir was still dominated by Buddhists and Kanishka, who was a Buddhist, ruled over there at that time. He called a congregation with the intention of improving the conditions of Buddhists and gave birth to the Mahayana community. He has also described in his travel accounts Mihirkul, the king of Punjab who had ordered the killing of the Buddhist monks of the five sections and had destroyed the royal family of Kandahar after winning it. He destroyed Buddhist monasteries, stupas and monks and ordered the killing of three lakh Buddhists on the banks of Sindh.

Buddhism was still prevalent in Mathura. He saw 20 monasteries and two thousand monks who prayed there.

He had heard of the praise for the Ganges (river Ganga) which was popular for washing sins away. He also saw a temple in Hardwar where big miracles took place. '*Hari ki Pauri*' had been constructed in stone by that time and significance of taking a bath over there had become popular by then.

Kannauj was the famous capital of the Gupta rulers at that time. He saw Hindus and Buddhists in harmony over here. He saw 100 monasteries and 10 thousand monks over here. He also found 200 Hindu temples and thousands of worshippers. He also happened to meet the Buddhist ruler Shiladitya, the second over there. He had gotten established a human like idol of Buddha made of gold on a 200 feet high tower situated on the eastern banks of the river Ganga.

He writes while describing the place – “He (Shiladitya) used to feed the Buddhist monks and Hindu Brahmans for the three months of the spring season. The entire place from the monastery to the palace used to be full of tents and small tents for the artists. A small idol of Buddha used to be kept on top of a well decorated elephant and Shiladitya, adorned like lord Indra, used to be on the left side of the idol. On the right used to move the king of Kaamroop in the security of five hundred war elephants. The king used to throw around pearls. Flowers of gold and silver and other precious items. The idol was bathed and Shiladitya himself carried it on his shoulders till the western tower. He then adorned it with

silk garments and ornaments embedded with gemstones. Thereafter there were meals and a discussed of the scriptures.”

Hiuen Tsang saw 10 Buddhist monasteries and 300 monks and a lot of Hindus in Ayodhya. He saw a domination of Hindus in Prayag and saw hundreds of people dying at the confluence of Ganga-Yamuna longing for the pleasures of heaven. He says that there was a tall pillar in the middle of the river which people would climb and view the setting sun. He also found Hindu domination in Shravasti, Kaushambi and Kashi. He saw 30 monasteries and 300 monks as opposed to 100 temples and 10 thousand priests in Kashi. Only the worship of lord Shiva was prevalent over here. There was a brass idol of Lord Shiva, 100 feet high, whose expression was so serious and magnificent as if it were alive. He had seen a human like idol of Buddha also over there.

He found Buddhist monasteries in a dilapidated state in Vaishali. A lot of Hindu temples had come up over there. 50 monasteries and ten thousand monks were seen in Magadha. The Hindus too had ten temples here. Patliputra had been completely devastated by then. He saw thousands of homes of Brahmans in Gaya. This traveler had seen the unprecedented splendor of Bihar and the Bodhi tree of Gaya. He writes-

“This is 260-270 feet tall and has a beautiful work of embroidery on it. There are idols made from pearls at some places whereas others have idols of sages and gods. There is a beautiful Indian gooseberry flower of brass on all the four sides. There is a huge palace monastery nearby which was built by the king of Lanka. It has 6 walls and towers which are three segments high. This is surrounded by a 30-40 feet high boundary walls. This has heavy sculptures in stone. There are golden and silver idols of Buddha embedded with gemstones. A huge fair of Buddhists takes place in the monsoon here. Lakhs of people come and celebrate day and night.”

He stayed with the king of Kaamroop at the Nalanda University for a few days. There he had talked to eminent scholars. Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were equally present in Munger, Eastern Bihar and Northern Bengal. From here, he travelled to Assam, Manipur, Sylhet etc. where a lot of Hindu temples had come up and the Buddhists had been wiped away to a significant extent. He did not see even one monastery over here.

He saw monasteries here and there in the state of Tamaralipt near the present city of Midnapur. He found both Buddhists and Hindus in Murshidabad. He had seen 100 monasteries and 10 thousand monks in Orissa. The famous Jagganath

temple of Puri had not come into existence by then but 10 Hindu temples had been built there. Buddhists considered this place as the only place to protect them. The Jagannath procession is carried out in Puri even today as per the traditions of the Buddhists. Buddhism was not prevalent in the kingdom of Kalinga but both Hinduism and Buddhism were equally prevalent in Barar. Popular sage Ascetic used to live here. 20 monasteries and 30 temples were seen in Andhra Pradesh. The Buddhists were extremely influential in the Dravidian country. There were 100 monasteries and 10 thousand monks here. Buddhists and Hindus were equal in the Malabar. He did not himself visit Lanka but he has written that there were 100 Buddhist monasteries and 20 thousand monks in Lanka. He saw numerous Buddhist monasteries and the famous Ajanta caves in Maharashtra. There was a 70 feet tall idol of Buddha here. He saw 100 monasteries and temples each in Malwa. He saw in Kutch, Gujarat and Sindh the decline of Buddhists and rise of the idol worshipping Hindus everywhere.

This travel account of Hiuen Tsang, like that of Fa Hien, is another bonafide, unbiased proof of the history of idol worship. The time of Fa Hien's travel was that of the celebration of Buddhism and the beginning of idol worship, whereas when Hiuen Tsang travelled Buddhism had degraded to a large extent and the ancient religion of Hinduism, in its current form, had been established. This era is termed as the struggle period for Buddhism and the ancient religion. Idol worship had become prevalent among Hindus also as a result of imitating the Buddhists and hundreds of Hindu temples had been built.

Some scholars opine that idol worship first began in Jainism and Buddhists learnt it from Jains, and Hindus in turn obtained it from the Buddhists and the Jains. It is possible that this was the case. But our intention here is just to prove that the idol worship, as it exists in Hinduism today, is a blessing of the Buddhism-Jainism era, and that it has got to do nothing with the ancient Arya religion.

The Persian word "*but*" which is clearly a derived from "Buddha" also proves that the first idol which was worshipped or came in contact with the citizens was that of Buddha, not just in India but also in countries like Iran. As a result, "*but*" began to be interchangeably used in place of idol in the Persian language. Therefore, the word "*but*" also proves that idol worship began with the idol of Buddha and idol worship gradually became prevalent in all the places where Buddhism spread.

Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his book 'The Discovery of India', has ratified our

thoughts which are mentioned above. He writes in the chapter “India and Greece” on page 172 that-

“It is an interesting thought that idol worship came from Greece to India. The Vedic religion opposed every kind of idol or image worship. There were no temples of idols of gods during the Vedic era. Although some signs of idol worship can be found among the communities that came earlier, but it can be definitely said that it did not have a widespread influence in this country. Early Buddhism was a staunch opponent and Buddha had strict orders against building images and idols. Greek sculptural art had a great influence in Afghanistan and around the frontier states and that slowly entered here also. But idols of Buddha were not the first ones to be made, Instead, those of messengers like Apollo (a Greek god), who were considered the previous incarnations of Buddha, were made. Later idols of Buddha began to be built. A few communities of Hinduism also began to imitate them but The Vedic religion was constantly free of this influence. Persian and Urdu languages still use the word “*but*”, which is an adaptation from “Buddha”, for idols.

“It is an interesting thought that image-worship came to India from Greece. The Vedic religion was opposed to all forms of idol and image-worship. There were not even any temples for the gods. There probably were some traces of image-worship in the older faiths of India, though this was certainly not widely prevalent. Early Buddhism was strongly opposed to it and there was a special prohibition against the making of image and statues of the Buddha. But Greek artistic influence in Afghanistan and round about the frontier was strong and gradually it had its way. Even so, no statues of the Buddha were made to begin with, but Apollo-like statues of Bodhisattvas (supposed to be the previous incarnations of the Buddha) appeared. These were followed by statues and images of the Buddha himself. This encouraged image-worship in some forms of Hinduism, though not in the Vedic religion which continued to be free of it. The word for an image or statue in Persian and in Hindustani still is *but* (Like put) derived from Buddha.”

Chapter 2

The Ancient Reason behind Idol Worship

Several reasons behind idol-worship might have come up across ages but mainly there are just two historical reasons – (1) The desire to keep the mortal remains of great men, and (2) the longing of the ignorant mankind to see an invisible object in the form of an idol.

Intelligent people made pictures and images of the learned and great men after their death in order to keep alive feelings of respect and dedication towards them among the common people so that they don't forget their teachings and ideologies. But as a result of ignorance and selfishness, their worship, like living people, became prevalent in a few centuries. It began to be considered that our ordinances can be removed only by praying and worshipping them. Facts such as true worship lies in following the great men were forgotten. Meaningless rituals like standing in front of their statues and asking for help, giving them a bath like other living beings, garlanding, coating with sandalwood, feeding, respecting etc. are just examples of the ignorance and superstition of mankind.

As has been already said, the Buddhist idol worship began exactly this way. Both Jains and Buddhists were godless. They had no ideal such as a god other than their preachers in front of them. The feeling of worshipping god is inherent as a seed in human tendency. Man is ignorant and incomplete. He feels the need of a power, which is powerful than himself in times of despair and distress. The communities or religions which lack the presence of theism, have helpless humane customs of worshipping the mausoleums of their leaders and preachers post their death. This is the reason why the statues of the preachers of Jainism and Buddhism began to be worshipped as if they were alive, after a few centuries had passed. Hindus imitated the Jains and Buddhists towards the end of the era of Buddhism and built idols of their Vedic gods apart from imagining them.

An ignorant society does not have the capability to understand deep philosophical thoughts. Its tendency is mainly towards worldly subjects. It is

satisfied only by imagining a form of the invisible elements. The three powers of the abstract god- Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh, Maruti, Indra, Saraswati, imagining natural elements as images, etc. are all a result of this tendency. This desire of man has gone to the extent of imagining terrifying images of disease and death. The history of idol worship abroad is also full of such imaginations. Deities and gods were imagined there too, after observing natural and supernatural phenomenon.

Some scholars opine that Buddhist missionaries saw the prevalence of idol worship in China, Greece, etc. and they brought this practice to their country along with them. Similarly many foreigners attacked this country and the mixing of idol worshipping communities like Hyun, Aabhira, etc. not only gave birth to the ideas of idol-worship but began the tradition of worshipping images of many gods and goddesses in this country also. Cunning and selfish people have always, everywhere taken advantage of the ignorance of the common man. As time passes such people showed miracles related to idols and started proving that divine power was associated with them. This is how idol worship was made a means of earning money by inappropriate and arrogant ways.

Chanakya instructs in his Kautilya Arthshastra that the king too should make use of such means to increase the taxes for the kingdom. Chanakya is said to have been the prime minister of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya and his era too falls within the era of Buddhism. He writes-

(१) पाखण्डसंघद्रव्यमश्रोत्रियभोग्यं देवद्रव्यं वा कृत्यकाराः प्रेतस्य

दग्ध हृदयस्य वा हस्ते न्येस्तमित्युपहरेयुः । ॥ ४३ ॥

(२) देवताध्यक्षो दुर्गराष्ट्रदेवतानां यथा स्वमेकस्थं कुर्यात् ॥ ४४ ॥

तथैवचापहरेत् ॥ ४५ ॥

(३) दैवतचैतयं सिद्धपुण्यस्थानमौपाधिकं वा रात्रा वुथाप्य यात्रा

समाजाभ्यामाजीवेत् ॥ ४६ ॥

(४) चैतयोपवनवृक्षेण वा देवताभिगमनमनर्तिव पुष्पफलयुक्तेन

ख्यापयेत् ॥ ४७ ॥

(५) मनुष्यकरं वा वृक्षे रक्षोभ्यं रूपयित्वा सिद्धव्यञ्जना

पौरजनपादानां हिरण्येन प्रतिः कुर्युः ॥ ४८ ॥

(६) सुरग्डायुक्ते वा कूपे नागमनियेतशिरस्कं हिरण्योपहारेण दर्शयेत्

नागप्रतिमायामन्तश्छिद्रायाम् ॥ ४९ ॥

(७) चैत्यछिद्रे वल्मीकछिद्रे वा सर्पदर्शनमाहारेण प्रतिबन्धसंज्ञं कृत्वा

श्रद्धानां दर्शयेत् ॥ ५० ॥

(८) अश्रद्धानानामाचमनप्रोक्षणेषु रसमुपचचाय देवताभिशापं ब्रूयात् ॥

५१ ॥

Meaning-

- (1) The wealth of any hypocrite association or temples which is not used by the Kshatriyas should be sent to the treasury and the experts should say that they had kept it with someone who died or got burnt.
- (2) Increase the wealth in the treasury just like the head of the gods and accumulate in the same manner.
- (3) Create an unusual happening or a temple or a magical place at night in order to give birth to a fair or procession over there in and earn money.
- (4) If flowers and fruits appear in a tree untimely then spread the news of the arrival of god.
- (5) Hide a man inside a tree in order to create fear for demons, and use this drama to make the citizens and foreigners offer gold for compensation.

- (6-7) Show a snake in the bore well when gold is offered. Its head should be tied. Devotees should be shown porous snake effigy, or temple or actual snake in Valmiki's hole, the snake should be first fed something and sedated.
- (8) Those who are not devoted should be given water (holy water that is sprinkled on devotees in a temple) mixed with something so that they faint, and it can be called the wrath of the god.

Before the current renunciation period, the common man in this country had complete faith in such miracles of idols. People used to be afraid of the wrath of the idols and the priests used to take full advantage of the same. Such thoughts have not been completely removed from the minds of the illiterate crowd even now.

Chapter 3

Vedic Era and Idol Worship

The Aryas have been considering the Vedas authorless from ancient times. All the communities of the Arya religion are unanimous regarding the divinity of the Vedas, that it is knowledge passed down by the gods, though they might differ in other principles. The Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, scriptures, Smriti, and even the Puranas which are the basic reason behind the present distorted form of the Arya religion, all together declare the Vedas as the voice of god. These are described to have appeared to four sages in the beginning of mankind and nature.

Among the western scholars, a lot of them believe in the principles of evolution. The Indian scholars who are influenced by them and do not believe in the authorless-ness of the Vedas, are at least forced to believe that Rig Veda is the oldest book in the world.

Earlier, to clear the meaning of the Vedas, they were considered as the base by the sages and created scriptures like the Brahmanas, Upanishads, Shastras etc. therefore we have considered the time of creation of these, which is far before the creation of nature, to be falling within the Vedic period. Also the era before the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is included within the Vedic period.

In the earlier chapter we have thrown some light on the modernity of idol-worship. The idol worshipping idol worship of the Hindu community

Keep trying to act according to the Vedas. Therefore this chapter will focus on thoughts regarding the opinion of Vedas, Brahmanas, and Scriptures and whether idol worship is in accordance with the Vedas.

The word idol is not Vedic, rather worldly. In fact, it has not been used at all in any of the four Vedas. It is written in Amarkosha part three, nanarthvarga 3, Shloka 66 - **मूर्ति कठिन्य काययोः ।**, meaning the name “idol” is that of body and difficulty. Therefore it is clear from the meaning of the word idol that it should have a shape and form. **आकाराविगडाकृती ।** (Amarkosha Part 3, nanarth Varg 3, Shloka 162) “Image is said to have an appearance”, and something with an

appearance has a form. The idols which are worshipped have a body and shape and are made of tough metals like gold, silver, brass, bronze, iron, stone, clay etc. Thus the meaning of the word idol given above is compliant.

The idols whose worship is prevalent among the Hindus are either imaginary idols of the three powers of the supreme god – brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh or their incarnations, messengers and preachers. A lot of idols are of their wives, family members, servants and vehicles. The “Shivlinga”, which is a fulsome manifestation of the phallus of Shiva-Parvati is also worshipped in India everywhere.

None of the idols which are described above belong to the supreme god. The Vedas clearly state that the god does not have an image-

न तस्य प्रतिमा अस्ति यस्य नाम महद्यशः ।
हिरण्यगर्भ S इतियेष मा मा हिथंसीदित्येषा
यसमान्न जात S इत्येषः ॥ - यजु. ३२ । ३ ॥

Meaning- the god whose fame is all over, has no image. It is described by mantras such as मा मा हिंसीत् ‘, हिरण्यगर्भ, यसमान्न जात, meaning the fame which is described by these mantras has no image. Mahidhar has also defined it as - तस्य पुरुषस्य प्रतिमा ,प्रतिमानुपमानं किञ्चिद्वस्तु नास्ति । अतएव नाम प्रसिद्धं, महत् यशः यस्यास्ति सर्वातिरिक्त यशः इतियादी ।, meaning there exists no image, representative, resemblance to that god; that is why he is the one who has great fame, this is how much respect he has.

Therefore if there is no image, representative or resemblance then how can his idol be made? This is the reason why all the idols which are known are either of the powers of the god or the incarnations, but none of the god himself.

God is devoid of image, form or body. Therefore an idol cannot exist. The following mantra from the Vedas describes this formlessness and incorporeal in clear words-

स पर्यगाळुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविर् शुद्धमपापविद्धं ।
कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूर्याथातथ्योऽथान्
व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥
- यजु . ४० । ८ ॥

Meaning- that god is omnipresent. The creator of the universe, incorporeal, free of diseases, free of the shackles of pulse, pure, free of sin, metaphysical, knowledgeable, supreme, self-proven, rewards the mortal people as per their deeds.

This mantra from the Vedas has clearly prohibited the god having any form by calling it “incorporeal”, disease-free and free of mortal restrictions.

The god has been described as being the world itself, using personification at many places in the Vedas. People try to use it to prove that the god has a form using this description. But such efforts are not fruitful. Some such mantras are cited here-

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।
स भूमिँ सर्वत स्पृत्वात्यतिष्ठदशाङ्गुलम् ॥

- यजु . ३१ । १॥

Meaning- Thousands of heads of all beings, thousands of eyes, countless limbs are in middle of the supreme power which is prevalent on all four sides of the earth. Five elements and five subtle senses are its components. It is present beyond the world that is in everything and far from everything.

This mantra describes god by a figure of speech as having thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of limbs. All annotators like Sayan, Mahidhar, and Udyan etc. have translated the above mantra as it has been done here. The heads, eyes and limbs of all beings are a part of that highness, and that is why it has been called so.

One of the mantras of the Rig Veda describes the divine powers of god in a similar figurative manner as follows-

विश्वतश्चक्षुरुत विश्वतोमुख विश्वतोबाहुरुत विश्वतस्पात् ।
स बाहुभ्यां धर्मात् सं पतत्रैद्यावाभूमी जनयन् देव एकः ॥ - ऋ.

१०। ८१ । ३ ॥

Meaning – The one whose eyes are present all over, whose faces are everywhere, whose acts are happening everywhere and whose limbs are everywhere. He drives everyone with his arms and legs. This is how one god gives birth to the twin worlds of heaven and earth.

Mahidhar has also obtained those powers from eyes, mouth, hands, legs etc. and not from the tangible senses. Udayanaacharya has also given similar translations in 'Nyay Kusumanjali'. The meaning of विश्वतोबाहु is given as omniscient, that of विश्वतोमुख as spokesman, of विश्वतश्चक्षु as synergism and that of विश्वतस्पात् as omnipresence.

Some mantras of the Atharva Veda describe god's body in a similar metaphorical language. –

यस्य भूमिः प्रमान्तरिक्षमुतोदरम् ।
दिव्यं भूमिः मूर्धानं तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्राह्मणे नमः । अ .
१० । ७ ॥ ३२ ॥

We pray to that great Brahma (creator) whose feet are the earth, the outer space whose upper body, and the heaven is whose head.

यस्य सूर्यश्च क्षुश्चन्द्रमाश्च पुनर्णवः ।
अग्निं यश्चक्र आस्यं तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्राह्मणे नमः ॥ ३३ ॥

We pray to that supreme creator whose eyes are the sun and the moon who becomes new time and again, whose face is the fire.

यस्य वातः प्राणापानौ चक्षुरग्निरसोऽभवन् ।
दिशो यश्चक्रे प्रजानीस्तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्राह्मणे नमः ॥ ३४ ॥

We pray to that supreme god whose inhalation-exhalation is the air, whose eyes are the sunrays, and who has made the directions a source of direction.

The Vedas and other Vedic literature describe the grand form of the god in such metaphorical language many times. But this cannot be used to prove the existence of any image of god. Ordinary educated people also understand such language and know its actual meaning. A few annotators might have tried to prove the existence of polytheism in the Vedas as a result of not interpreting them correctly. But none of them has predicated the existence of idol worship in the Vedas. This is the reason why not a single mantra from the Vedas has been able to be presented in favor of idol worship till date. The mantras which have been presented have not been translated to contain idol worship by any ancient or contemporary annotator.

The Upanishads are scriptures of Brahma's knowledge. They have a high position in the Vedic literature. These too support the formlessness of god and oppose god having a form. Certain citations have been given in support of this –
यस्य वातः प्राणापानौ चक्षुरग्निरसोऽभवन् । दिशो यश्चक्रे प्रजानीस्तस्मै ज्येष्ठाय ब्राह्मणे नमः ॥ ३४ ॥

The eyes cannot reach there, nor can voice or mind. Therefore, nothing is known about it, nor is it possible to know, which could make preaching possible. It is different from known substances and different from the unknown. This is what is heard from ancient teachers, who teach us about it.

यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं, येन वागभ्युदयते ।

तदेव ब्रम्हा त्वं विद्धि, नेदं यदिद मुपासते ॥ ४ ॥

यन्मनसा न मनुते, येनाहुर्मनो मतम् ।

तदेव ब्रम्हा त्वं विद्धि, नेदं यदिद मुपासते ॥ ५ ॥

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति, येन चक्षूंषि पश्यन्ति ।

तदेव ब्रम्हा त्वं विद्धि, नेदं यदिद मुपासते ॥ ६ ॥

यच्छ्रोत्रेण न श्रणोति, येन श्रोत्र मिदं श्रुतम् ।

तदेव ब्रम्हा त्वं विद्धि, नेदं यदिद मुपासते ॥ ७ ॥

यत्प्राणेन न प्राणिति, येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।

तदेव ब्रम्हा त्वं विद्धि, नेदं यदिद मुपासते ॥ ८ ॥

Brahma is known as the one who cannot be thrown light upon by voice, but who lights up voice. Brahma is not who is served through speech. (4)

Know Brahma as the one who helps the mind contemplate, not one who is contemplated by the mind. The one is contemplated by the mind is not Brahma. (5)

Know Brahma not as the one whom eyes can see but as the one whom eyes can be seen from. Brahma is not what can be seen by the eyes. (6)

Know Brahma as the one with whose help the ears hear, not as the one which can be heard by the ear. Brahma is not one whom the ear can hear. (7)

The one who does not trade life for life, but with whose help life trades itself is

Brahma. The one who is involved in the trade of life is not Brahma.

The above lines form the Upanishads clearly state that since god is devoid of any form, it is not something that can be embraced by the senses.

अशरीरं शरीरेषु अन्वस्थेष्ववस्तिथम् ।
महान्तं विभुमात्मानं मट्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥
- कठ. १ । २ । २२ ॥

That god is free of a bodily form in spite of residing in the bodies of people. It is constant among the things which are subject to change. Once a man comes to know that great divine soul, he becomes free of all grief.

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाऽरसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।
अनाद्यनन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निच्चाय तं मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुच्यते ॥
- कठ. ३ । १५ ॥

The Brahma is not a word, not a touch, not a form, does not have juice or smell. It is indestructible, always constant, not born, subtle than boundless importance, and immovable. Knowing it in a defined way frees man from the shackles of death.

अणोरणीयान् महतोमहीनायात्मास्य जनतोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।
ततः क्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुः प्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥
- कठ. २ । २० ॥

Brahma is subtler than the subtle, bigger than the biggest. It is situated in the sky of the heart of this creature. A being free of sorrow and desire and whose mind is pure can see the glory of that soul.

इंद्रियेभ्यः परं मानो मनसः सत्त्वमुत्तमम् ।
सत्त्वादपि महानत्मा महतोऽव्यक्तमुत्तमम् ॥

- कठ. ६ । ७ ॥

अव्यक्तात्तु परः पुरुषो व्यापकोऽलिङ्ग एव च ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते जन्तुरमृतत्वं च गच्छति ॥

- कठ. ६ । ८ ॥

The mind is subtler than the senses, and pride is subtler than the mind. Importance is subtler than pride and nature and living souls are subtler than the importance. The almighty is even subtler than life and nature because it is omnipresent and free of symbols and form. Knowing the almighty frees man of sorrows and gain immortality.

न संदृशे तिष्ठि रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिकल्पितो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

- कठ. ६ । ९ ।

No form of this Brahma is in front of us, nor can someone see it with their eyes. This can only be understood by heart, mind and intelligence. People who know it become immortal.

यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्णमचक्षुः श्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम् ।
नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥

- मुं. १ । १ । ६ ।

The almighty which can neither be see nor touched, which does not have a caste or color, which neither have eyes and ears, nor hands and legs, is omnipresent, in heaven and is subtle and indeclinable. Patient men can see him everywhere for the sake of that world.

दिव्यो हयामूर्तः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो हयाजः ।
अप्राणो हयामनाः शुभ्रोः हयाक्षरात् परतः परः ॥

- मुंड. २ । २ ।

The Brahma is definitely radiant, idol-less, omnipresent, present everywhere-in and out, free of birth, free of life, devoid of mind, pure, subtle, indestructible and subtler than life.

न चक्षुषा गृह्यते नापि वाचा नान्यैर्देवैस्तपसा कर्मणा ।
ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्वसततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः

॥

- मुं. ३ । १ । ८ ।

The Brahma cannot be taken by the eyes, nor by voice or senses, not even by hard work and goodwill. In fact, one with a soul pure of knowledge can only see the Brahma on concentrating.

4th January

तिलेषु तैलं दधिनीव सपिरापः स्रोतः स्वरणीषु चाग्निः ।
एवमात्मात्मानि गृह्यतेऽसौ सत्येनैनं तपसा योऽनुपश्यति ॥

- श्वे. १ । १५ ॥

Just like oil in sesame, butter in milk, water in reservoirs, fire in hearths, are all obtained by rubbing, grinding, digging and churning, the almighty is also made a part of the soul if someone looks at it with the eyes of knowledge with hard work and truthfulness.

सर्वव्यापिनमात्मानं क्षीरे सरपरिवार्षितम् ।
आत्मविद्यातपोमूलं तदब्रह्मोष्णिषत्परम् ॥

- श्वे . ३ । १६ ॥

He is present everywhere and in everything just like butter in milk. The keys to attaining him are physiological knowledge and perseverance. Brahma is the

absolute mystery of the Upanishads.

सर्वतः पणिपादं तत् सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।

सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमा वृत्य तिष्ठि ॥

- श्वे . ३ । १७ ॥

His hands and legs are everywhere. His eyes, heads and faces are present everywhere too. His ears are everywhere and he surrounds everyone in the world.

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।

सर्वस्य प्रभुमीशानं सर्वस्य शरणं बृहत् ॥

- श्वे . ३ । १७ ॥

He throws light on the qualities of all senses, but is still free of the senses. He is the master of all, rules over everyone and provides shelter for all.

अपाणिपादो जवनो गृहीता पश्यत्यचक्षुः स क्षुणोत्यकर्णः ।

स वेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्ति वेत्ता तमाहुरग्र्यं पुरुषं महान्तम्

॥

- श्वे. ३ । १९ ॥

He is the one who accepts everyone without arms and is swift without legs. He hears without ears and sees without eyes. He knows everything which is possible to be known, but no one knows his end. The learned men call him the chief supreme person.

सूक्ष्मातिसूक्ष्मं कलिलस्य मध्ये विश्वस्य स्रष्टारमनेकरूपम् ।

विश्वस्यैकं परिवेष्टितारं ज्ञात्वा शिवं शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति ॥

- श्वे. ४ । १४ ॥

That god is subtler than the subtle. It is present in this world and its every element. It has created this world and the substances found in it. It is surrounding the entire world. Man attains peace after knowing that kind and benevolent natured god.

न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्यते न तत्समश्चाभ्यधिकश्च
दृश्यते।

पराऽस्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च ॥

- श्वे. ६ । ८ ॥

Nothing is his work. Neither is someone else equal to him nor greater than him. His power is the greatest. He has the ability to work, strength and knowledge inherently.

न तस्य कश्चित्पतिरस्ति लोके न चेशिता नैव च तस्य लिङ्गम्

।

स कारणं करणाधिपाधिपो न चास्य कश्चिज्जनिता न चाधिपः

॥

- श्वे. ६ । ९ ॥

There is no master of that almighty in the world, neither does he have a ruler nor a symbol. He is the due sake of the world. He is the lord of the senses and the living souls. Neither is he born from someone nor is someone his master.

The abovementioned sentences from the Upanishads all not only describe god as clearly formless but also tell that god can be ingrained in our souls only by pristine meditation. Therefore, the saying that “idol-worship” is the means to attain god” is refuted on its own. The Vedas too describe this way of attaining god in the following words-

युञ्जते मन उत युञ्जते धियो विप्रा विप्रस्य बृहतो विपिशितः

।

वी होत्रा दिधे वयुनाविदेयक इनम्ही देवस्य सवितुः परिष्टुतिः ॥

- ऋ. ५ । ८१ । १

युक्ते मनसा वयं देवस्य सवितुः सवे स्वर्ग्याय शक्त्या ।

- यजु. ११ । २ ॥

युजे वां ब्रह्मा पूर्वं नामोभिर्वि श्लोकऽ एतो पथेव सुरेः ।

श्रवन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ॥

- यजु. ११ । ५ ॥

Meaning, people who are wiser than the scholars, and those who perform all rituals, all devote their mind and intelligence to the one lord of the lords. We use all our strength to devote our minds to god for the heavenly pleasures. Everyone should open their ears and hear that the ancestors have travelled the path of enlightenment by the strength of concentration. Therefore, the one who performs yoga and is devoted to Brahma will be the one who will attain this supreme path.

As far as rationalism, that is reason and logic, is concerned philosophy holds the greatest position in Vedic literature. Not just Vedic literature, even if we say that philosophy is greater than the rationalism prevalent in the world, then it would be no exaggeration. The topics which were discussed by philosophy thousands of years ago are still beyond the reach of western science. Its amazing poetic logic-style does not fail to surprise the world. A few gems of this Indian knowledge warehouse, which shed light on the form of god are cited below from the Vedanta Darshan-

पत्युरसामञ्जस्यात् । वे. २ । २ । ३७ ॥ सम्बन्धानुपपत्तेश्च ।

३८ ॥ अधिष्ठानानुपपत्तेश्च ॥ ३९ ॥ करणवच्चेन भोगादिभ्यः ॥

४० ॥ अन्तवत्त्वमसर्वज्ञता वा ॥ ४१ ॥ उत्तपत्यसम्भवात् ॥

४२ ॥

न च कर्तुः करणम् ॥ ४३ ॥ विज्ञानादिभावे तत्प्रतिषेधः । ४४

॥ विप्रतिषेदाच्च । ४५ ॥

It is not right to call the god as having a form by virtue of being free of logic. (37). It is not right to take sides with the thought that god has a form because of no relation between the god and nature. (38). Anything which has a form needs a place but since the almighty does not have one place, it does not have any form. (39). If the god is believed to have senses, then he will also feel happiness and pain just like us, thus he does not have a form. (40). If we consider the god to be having a body then we have to also consider it mortal and not omniscient. And god cannot be ignorant. (41). This stance is further substantiated by the impossibility of the birth of god. (42). The god does not have any senses. (43). He god cannot be born due to the presence of all religions and knowledge in harmony. (44). The formless god cannot be said to have a form just because both form and formlessness are opposed. (45).

अरूपवदेव हि तत्प्रधानतवाद् । वे. ३ । २ । १४ ॥

The god is also formless due to the importance given to sentences that describe formlessness.

तदव्यक्तमाहः हि । - वे. ३ । २ । २३ ॥

It is decided to call Brahma as one that cannot be described.

अदृश्यत्वादिगुणको धर्मोक्तेः । - वे. १ । २ । २१ ॥

The god is full of virtues which are invisible and intangible.

The above mentioned lines about the topic of the formlessness of god are not expected to have any description or validation. These lines have clearly proved god as not having a form and has given numerous logics to prove so.

“What is the means to attain god?” Sage Patanjali has independently written an unprecedented book on this subject, which is popularly known as “Yog-Darshan”. This book describes the path to unite with god as controlling the instincts of the mind that is, establishing life in its true self.

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिर्निरोधः ।

Yoga helps control the instincts of the mind. (2) तदा दृष्टुः स्वरूपे ऽ वस्थानम् ॥ ३ ।

This is when life is established. (3). Not much is being written here due to the fear of it being excessively detailed. This book has a different chapter called “Idol Worship and Yoga”. Therefore this topic shall be discussed there only.

Manusmriti, popularly known as the righteous path for man, is a priceless treasure of the Arya civilization. The personal, social, political duties and deeds, which are universally given in this book by Manu, still hold relevance and the capacity to guide mankind on the right path even today. In the beginning itself, the nature of god has been described while describing the topic of the birth of nature. The god has been said to be unthinkable, not lovable, immortal, free of desires, subtlest, formless etc. even here.

त्वमेको हास्य सर्वस्य निधानस्य स्वयंभुवः ।

अचिंत्यस्याप्रेमयस्य कार्यं तत्त्वार्थवित्प्रभो ॥ १ । ३ ॥

You (Manu) are the only one who knows and understands the entire purpose of the Vedas as it is. The Vedas are unthinkable, immortal and the predication of god.

ततः स्वयम्भूर्भगवानव्यक्तो व्यञ्जयन्निदम् ।

महाभूतादिवृत्तौजाः प्रादुरासीत्तमोनुद ॥ १ । ६ ॥

योऽसावतीन्द्रियग्राह्याः सूक्ष्मोऽव्यक्तः सनातनः ।

सर्वभूतमयोऽचिंत्य स एव स्वयमुद्बभौ ॥ १ । ७ ॥

The infinite god, free of birth and not known by the senses, inspiring nature, and full of the strength of important elements - sky, fire, air, water, earth etc. has illuminated them and produced itself. (6). The one who is not known by the senses and is subtle, constant, and present everywhere in the entire world, does

not have a form, has appeared on its own. (7).

The meaning of appearance of god in these shlokas implies appearing in the universal or huge form. The style here has figure of speech similar to some mantras of the Vedas which have been mentioned before. The shlokas yet to come have described in detail this body, said to be the universe, giving birth to the nature. The sixth chapter of Manusmriti has mentioned the attainment of god through the path of yoga. Many places have instructed everyone about rituals and offerings-

सूक्ष्मतां चान्ववेक्षेत् योगेन परमात्मनः । ६ । ६५ ॥

प्रियेषु स्वेषु सुकृतमप्रियेषु च दुष्कृतम् ।

विसृज्य ध्यान योगेन ब्रह्मा भ्येति सनातनम् ॥ ६ । ७९ ॥

Brahma himself can be reached by leaving fortune which is dear and sorrow when not dear and solely meditating.

Anyone who reads the Manusmriti can easily guess that this book has a lot that has been mixed from earlier. It has so many mutually contradictory places which clearly show the interference of others. There are strong evidences of animal offerings, alcohol, meat and slaughtering, the caste system by birth, memorials for the dead etc. malpractices that are prevalent in the present being supported. Also there are shlokas which oppose the same. In spite of having such projected and varied views, no shlokas can be found supporting idol worship or incarnation in the entire Manusmriti. Therefore, there is no difficulty in reaching the conclusion that the birth of idol worship is far before the era of Manusmriti. Yajna rituals, altar, omkar chanting, Gayatri mantra etc, have been said to be necessary, constant and systematic deeds. This automatically denies idol worship in our daily routine. A few such Shlokas from the Manusmriti are given below-

ऋषियज्ञं देवयज्ञं भूतयज्ञं च सर्वदा ।

नृयज्ञं पितृयज्ञं च यथाशक्ति न हाप्येत् ॥ ४ । २९ ॥

Never leave evening, self-study, altar, sacrifice, guests, and ancestral yajna and always continue doing.

उथायावश्यकं कृत्वा कृतशौचः समाहितः ।
पूर्वा संध्यां जंपस्तिष्ठेत्स्वकाले चापरां चिरम् ॥ ४ । ९३ ॥

Wake up in the auspicious time of the Brahma, get rid of urine and stool, do necessary work, be pure and careful in the morning and similarly everything in time in the evening.

अग्निहोत्रं च जुहुयादाद्यन्ते द्युनिशोः सदा ।
दर्शने चारमासान्ते पौर्णमासेन चैव हि ॥ ४ । ९५ ॥

Perform yajnas in fire at the end of day and night and the prayers of new moon and full moon every fortnight.

मङ्गलाचारयुक्तः स्यात्प्रयतात्मा जितेंद्रियः ।
जपेच्च जुहुयाचैव नित्यमग्निम तंद्रितः ॥ ४ ॥ ९४५ ॥

Fill yourself with the best thoughts, clean soul, be free of indolence for offering prayers and sacrifice.

पूर्वा संध्यां जंपस्तिष्ठेत्सावित्रीमार्कदर्शनात् ।
पश्चिमां तु समासीनः सम्यगृक्षविभाग ॥ २ ॥ १०१ ॥

The prayer of morning and chant of Gayatri, should be done being stationary till sunrise and the evening prayer should be done till stars can be seen.

ओंकारपूर्विकास्तिस्त्रो महाव्याहृतयोऽव्ययाः ।
त्रिपदा चैव सावित्री विजेयं ब्राह्मणो मुखम् ॥ २ ॥ ८१ ॥

The face of Gayathri is full of omkar, indestructible, it is nothing brahma.

योऽधीतेऽहन्यहन्येत्रांस्त्रीणि वर्षाण्यतन्द्रितः ।
स ब्रम्हा परमभ्येति वायुभूतः खमूर्तिमान् ॥ ८२ ॥

The man who chants the Gayathri mantra and ‘Om’ for three years every day, being free of laziness, he attains the brahma and gets free of the shackles of his mortal body.

It is well established by the aforementioned citations from the Vedas, the

Upanishads and the scriptures that god has no form and there is no question of senses. Then how can its image or idol be made? These citations also prove that idol worship has been never said to be a means of attaining god in any case or anywhere in the entire Vedic literature. Therefore, those people who publicize idol worship in the name of the Vedas, either have not pursued them well or want to cover the truth out of partiality and selfishness.

Chapter 4

Idol Worship and Anthropomorphism

At the time when idol worship was imagined, it was necessary that god should be proved to have a form around that time, because it is not possible to have an image or a form without having a shape or form. This gap was filled by the creation of three forms of god- Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh. These are three different names, having their own qualities, of the same god. God creates the universe, that is why is called brahma. He runs the universe, hence the name Vishnu. He also destroys, therefore is also known as Mahesh or Rudra. These three are not any separate bodies or special powers, but god is known by these names because of having these three qualities.

In a similar way, there is a description of different names of gods having different qualities in the Vedas. Later people considered these to be different gods as a result of ignorance. The poets appreciated them, the painters painted them to display their talent, and the sculptors made their idols. As far as art is concerned, no one is at fault in this case. But as times changed, and ignorance and selfishness gave birth to the practices of worshipping them like great living men and claims of them having miraculous powers for the sake of the satisfaction of the common masses. This is when a severe misuse began.

Incarnation, in the present Hindu community, is an imagination to make formless almighty into a form. The god does not have a form, but can incarnate and have a body. The idols which are worshipped are the idols of these incarnations, this is the opinion of the masses. If it is seen this way, then anthropomorphism and idol worship are related like twin siblings and are dependent on each other in many ways.

Why does god take a shape and incarnate to appear in this world? Why does he need to do this? There are numerous interesting stories, illustrations, and imaginations in the Puranas pertaining to this concept. The writers of these Puranas are the actual perpetrators of idol worship and these were written around the same time as when idol worship began. The Puranas have imagined 24

incarnations, out of which ten are main. All of these, except a few, are considered to be incarnations of Vishnu as a whole or partially. Some of these incarnations are in the form of humans, like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Lord Shiva (Shankar), etc. and some of them are animals like Varaha (boar), Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), etc. But the importance of Vishnu in these incarnations proves that these were imagined by the 'Vaishnavas', that is, the people who belong to the school of thought that worships Lord Vishnu.

The rationale given in support of anthropomorphism, are very weak and poor. Firstly, formless and form are two opposite qualities which the same thing can never possess. God is either formless or realizable. If god too is considered to have a living body like any other living being, then he would no longer stay god and rather become another living creature.

What was the need felt by god to take a form? This question is often answered by the following popular shlokas from the 'Geeta' (Bhagavad-Gita), which have now become popular sayings among the Hindus:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारतः ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ७ ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थाप्नार्थाय संभवानि युगे युगे ॥ ८ ॥ - अ. ४

Similarly, the following shloka from the Shrimad Bhagwat, which is an important of the Vaishnava community, also has the same meaning-

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य क्षयो वृद्धिश्च पाप्मान् ।
तदा तू भगवानीश आत्मानं सृजते हरिः ॥ ५६ ॥

- स्कं . ९ , अ . २४

The above shlokas mean that whenever righteousness is in trouble and sins are increasing, the god himself incarnates for the sake of protecting the innocent people and establishing righteousness. But this scheme is strongly criticized in the 'Devi Bhagwat' which is an important scripture of the Shakta community-

मायाविमोहिता मन्दाः प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ।
 करोति स्वेच्छया विष्णु रवताराननेकशः ॥ ४७ ॥
 मन्दोऽपि दुःख गहने गर्भवासेऽसंकटे ।
 न करोति मतिं विद्वान् कथं कुर्यात् स चक्रभृत् ॥ ४८ ॥
 कौसल्या देवकी गर्भे विष्णामलसमाकुले ।
 स्वेच्छया प्रवदन्त्यद्वागतो हि मधुसूदनः ॥ ४९ ॥
 वैकुण्ठसदनं त्यक्त्वा गर्भवासे सुखं नु किम् ।
 चिन्ता कोटि समुत्थाने दुःखदे विषसंमिते ॥ ५० ॥ - (देवी
 भागवत स्कं. ३ अ. २९)

Meaning- foolish scholars, attracted by wealth and pleasures, say that lord Vishnu incarnates himself as per his wish. Even foolish man does not want to reside in the womb since it is painful, then how can the almighty Vishnu do that? Some people say that Vishnu wishfully went in the wombs, full of bodily fluids, of Kausalya and Devaki. After all, what is the pleasure in residing inside a womb which leads to a thousand worries and problems, leaving behind the pleasures of heaven?

Similarly, the reason for incarnation in many other Puranas has been told to be boon, curse or good deeds. The requirements for the birth of a living body cannot be met by the almighty since those processes cannot take place in him. Birth is another name for the relation of soul, body, senses and mind. Joy and sorrow are linked to birth. Birth requires a reason in the form of righteousness or non-righteousness. This requires tendency, which in turn requires malice which required the presence of false knowledge. But it is not possible for the almighty to have false or incomplete knowledge, hence god taking birth is impossible. Patanjali has clearly written this fact in the following sentence-

क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशयैरपरामृष्टः पुरुषविशेष ईश्वर ॥
 - यो . १ । २४ ॥

Meaning, ignorance, pride, enthusiasm, malice, persistence are the five factors which affect karma and the fruits of our deeds. God is one who is free of these and desire.

Some people feel that just like soul is incapable of functioning in the absence of

a body, even god cannot create the universe without having a bodily form. But they forget that living beings are limited to a place whereas god is omnipresent. It is the power that is present within each particle, and thus does not need any external components to give motion to these particles. Living creatures need their bodies since they are not universal but god is universally present and therefore does not need external means.

Actually, if we think over it impartially, incarnation is a disgrace to the divine god. The god who is the most powerful, and omnipresent, why does he need to be tied in the shackles of birth and death for the sake of protecting good men and destroying evil? The god who is capable of giving birth to demons like Ravana, Kansa etc. cannot destroy them without adopting a living form? Creating is difficult compared to destroying. Therefore, the mere thought of taking a bodily form for destroying the evil is completely baseless and unsubstantial. The history of the world stands witness that evil keeps spreading in every era and every country and they are also destroyed by the king or his brave men. What is the need for a divine incarnation for this purpose? Which task cannot be carried out without the intervention of god in the form of his incarnation?

People who tell that historical people like Rama, Krishna etc. are incarnations of god are the ones who stand in the way of people who want to get inspired from the great deeds of these so called incarnations. On the other hand, they undermine their great deeds in the name of incarnation. If Rama is god, then none of his doings is important. Such things are simply common for god. Similar examples can be given for the other 'avatars' or incarnations. When a person sees that an act of heroism is performed by Rama or Krishna, that it is an act of god, then he cannot gather courage to imitate the same. He considers himself a petty creature and experiences his incapability. The principle of anthropomorphism has helped in crippling Hindus just like idol worship has done. This resulted in the other communities progressing and reaching new heights on the basis of their hard work as opposed to the unfortunate Hindu community which is waiting idly for the 'Kalki' incarnation. This is how this school of thought has done more harm than good, harm which cannot be compensated for without completely eradicating these false thoughts.

The Vedas, Upanishads, scriptures all render god as unborn and free of flaws. All describe him as free of the cycle of life and death –

अजो न क्षां दाधार पृथिवीं तस्तम्भ द्या मन्त्रेभिः सत्यैः।
प्रिया पदानि पश्वो निपाहि विश्वायुरग्ने गुहा गुहं गाः ॥

- ऋ. १ । ३७ । ३ ॥

Meaning- the god who does not take birth carries the earth with indestructible thoughts. He is holding the vast space in the universe, created the natural elements, given long life, frees of shackles, and is knows all secrets since he resides in the mind. Oh wise creature! Help us achieve the achievable just like him.

शन्नो अज एकपाद्देवोऽस्तु शन्नोऽहिर्बुध्न्यः शं समुद्रः ।
शन्नो अपां नापात्पेरुरस्तु शं नः पृश्निर्भवतु देवगोपाः ॥

- ऋ. ७ । ३५ । १३ ॥

The indestructible and unborn god be beneficial for us. The clouds in the sky be helpful to us. The ocean be peaceful. The boat, which does not have limbs but helps us cross the water, be beneficial. The universe which protects the sun etc. be pleasant to us.

प्रजापतिश्च गर्भं अन्तरजायमानो बहुधा विजायते।
तस्य योनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीरास्तस्मिन् ह तस्थुर्भुर्विनानि विश्वा

॥

- यजु. ३१ । १९ ॥

The god is not born by virtue of its nature, resides in the soul and in the hearts of all and appears especially in many forms. The brave men see his character in every direction. All the worlds and universes reside in him.

ब्रह्मा वा अजः ।

Brahma is the one who does not take birth.

The god has been described as the one who does not take birth at many places in the Upanishads-

वेदाहमेतमजरं पुराणं सर्वात्मानं सर्वगतं विभुत्वात् ।
जन्मनिरोधं प्रवदन्ति यस्य ब्रह्मावादिनो प्रवदन्ति नित्यम् ॥

- श्वे. ३ । २१ ॥

I know that very Brahma who is ancient and unborn. He is universally everyone's soul and body. The followers of Brahma negate his birth because he is constant and immortal.

एकधैवानुद्ष्टव्यमेतदप्रमेयं ध्रुवम् ।
विरजः पर आकाशा दजं आत्मा महान् ध्रुवः ॥

- ब्र. ४ । ४ । २०

This indestructible Brahma should be seen in one way only, it is free of dirt, beyond the sky, free of birth, great soul and indestructible.

दिव्यो हयामूर्त्तः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो हयाजः ।
अप्राणो हयामनाः शुभ्रोः हयाक्षरात् परतः परः ॥

- मुंड. २ । २ ।

That divine person does not have an idol, is present everywhere, inside and outside. It lacks life or mind. It is radiant and is beyond nature which cannot be described.

अजं ध्रुवं सर्वतत्त्वैर्विशुद्धं ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपाशैः ॥
- श्वे. २ । १५ ॥

The perpetrators of Brahma, are freed of traps on knowing the supreme almighty who is unborn, the pole star and different from all elements.

स वा नेष महानज आत्माऽजरोऽमरोऽमृतोऽभयं ब्रम्हा ।
- ब्र. ४. ४. २५ ॥

That great, unborn soul, immortal, fearless, nectar is Brahms.
The philosophical texts also call the god as unborn only-

उत्पत्त्यसंभावात् । । वेदान्त . २ । २ । ३९ ॥

God does not have any master since his birth has been found to be impossible.

न च कर्तुः करणम् । । वे . २ । २ । ४० ॥

Neither does that almighty have any senses.

करणवच्चेन्न भोगदिभ्यः । वे . २ । २ । ३७ ॥

Shri Swami Shankaracharya's annotation in this regard is worth having a look at
—

लोकदृष्ट्यनुसारेण ईश्वरस्यापि किञ्चित्करण नामायनं शरीरं
कामेन कल्पयते । एवमपि नोपपद्यते ।
सा शरीरत्वे ही सति संसारिवद्
भोगत्वप्रसंगादीश्वरस्याप्यनीश्वरत्वं प्रसज्येत् ।

Meaning, as per public sight, it is not right to consider god as an abode of the senses, or a body. This is because if god had senses then he too would have had to experience joys and sorrows like the creatures of the world and considering this would not let god be god.

All the proofs refuting anthropomorphism that have been cited here do not expect any explanation or commentary. Then entire ancient Vedic literature openly prohibits this school of thought. Therefore it is concluded that when idol worship was created long before the Vedic era, then incarnations were imagined to give a form to god.

Some people try to prove that there is no presence of criticizing statements in the Vedas like “Do not worship idols” and “The god does not incarnate”. They try creating the misconception that the Vedas might not support it but neither do they oppose it. These people forget that the clear refutation of anything is possible only by looking at the flaws behind its prevalence. When something was not prevalent, how would it be criticized? As we have already proved that the era of idol worship and anthropomorphism is far before the Vedic era, hence it is neither surprising nor wrong if we don't find a clear support or criticism in the Vedic literature.

Chapter 5

Idol Worship and Polytheism

An alternate base for idol worship is the imagination of multiple gods. As we have written earlier, The Vedas have described multiple names of god owing to multiple qualities. People mistook that and imagined the presence of various different gods and made their idols which began to be worshipped.

Many misunderstandings have happened due to lack of understanding of the usage of the word 'Dev' which means god in Indian religious literature. The Hindi word 'Dev' has originated from its root word 'Divu'. This has various meanings- play, behavior, luster, joy, dreams, the desire to win, glorification, estrus, radiance and speed. In this way, any object which means one of the above is 'Dev'. Every word in the Vedic Sanskrit had multiple meanings, but in the long run they became conventional and with one meaning. 'Dev' is one of those words. Among the meanings mentioned before, one meaning of 'Dev' is radiant. Thus if its meaning is god or wise on one side, it is also radiant nonliving elements like the sun and moon on the other side. Ancient Vedic scholar yaskacharya has given the following meanings for the word 'Dev' –

देवो दानाद् वा दीपनाद् वा, द्योतनाद् वा द्युस्थानो भवतीति

वा ।

- निरुक्त अ. ७ खं. १५

'The one who gives and the one who spreads light and the one who makes appear and the one who is the son of light, he is the god.' Thus the one who gives charity is god. The teachers who teach the right path, scholars, and parents are god. The light emitting substances like the sun and the moon are also god. Swami Dayanand has written many meanings of the word 'Dev' or god in 'Rigvedadibhashya Bhumika' under the topic 'Ved-Vishay vichar' which means thoughts relating to the Vedas –

अत्र परिगणम् । गायत्र्यादिच्छन्दोविन्ता मन्त्रा ईश्वराज्ञा यज्ञः ।
यज्ञागडं, प्रजापतिः परमेश्वरः, नराः , कामः, विद्वान्, अतिथिः,
माता, पिता, आचार्यश्चेति कर्मकाण्डादीन्प्रत्येता देवताः सन्ति

॥

The mantras containing Gayatri etc. stanzas, the order of god, the yajnas and their parts, kings, almighty, man, work, scholars, guests, mother, father, and teachers are called god.

At one place in the Yajurveda, the senses have been called god-

नैनद् देवा आप्नुवन् । - यजुर्वेद ४० । ४ ।

The senses cannot reach that almighty.

Therefore, when the word 'Dev' has various meanings, then it is inappropriate to say by merely looking at the usage of this word in plural in the Vedas proves polytheism or the existence of multiple gods.

People saw that the word 'Dev' was used in the Vedas for the sun, the moon, lightning, the earth and other non-living substances and were under the impression that the Vedas prescribe that these be worshipped. But the fact is that the places that find this mention have not even the slightest indication towards their worship. It was when the meaning of 'Dev' began to be used for other things apart from god or divine substances, that this misconception took birth amongst the people that the Vedas believe in the existence of multiple gods and worshipping them. These gods were Indra for the clouds, Varuna for water, Surya for the sun etc. which were considered to be various gods. Later, this imagination led to the building of idols for all these gods and their worship began. But as idol worship became a good source of income, a separate god was imagined for everything that existed in nature and its worship was propagated after making idols. Common Hindus believe even today that rivers, mountains, fire, air, etc. all the natural and non-living elements have their own different, separate, designated gods.

The Puranas have descriptions pertaining to their worship at many places. But what are these designated gods, how do they look like and where are they are questions that no one cares to find answers to. Do they also have some ruling power like the soul? They definitely should have one, because they cannot be inanimate. Then are they omniscient, all powerful and renderers of the fruits of

karma like the almighty? If they are omniscient, all powerful and rendering the fruits of karma, then what is the difference between them and god? Alternately, are they unborn and immortal? Definite or fixed answers cannot be given for questions like these and others.

The Puranas are full of many stories of the gods fighting among themselves like ordinary human beings, stories of jealousy and hatred, all of which are natural evidences of polytheism. Some people are of the belief that just like many employees are needed for managing a kingdom, even controlling the nature requires a large number of gods. But this is a misconception that originates as a result of incomplete understanding of the omnipresence and the power of god. A king is confined to one particular place due to which he is not omniscient, and he cannot rule his kingdom alone since he has limited power. This is why he needs helpers and workers to help himself. But the god knows everything since he is present everywhere and is all powerful because of which he does not need help from any other power.

Now the question remains that when there is no mention of the worship of these gods anywhere in the Vedas, then how did this misconception come into existence? As we have written already, the Vedic language used a word in different connotations which later became limited and the mantras of the Vedas began to be having a few interpretations only. Similarly, god possesses many qualities which gave rise to different names that are found in the Vedas. It has been said in the Rig Veda that-

इंद्रम मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गुरुत्मान् ।
एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

- ऋग्. १ । १६४ । ४६ ।

The almighty has been given many names simultaneously like Indra, Mitra, Agni, Divya, Supurna, Gurutmaan, Yama, Matrishiva, meaning, only one god is pointed to by all these names.

God has been called fire (Agni), air (Vayu), sun (Aditya), Moon (chandrama), Venus (shukra) and the like-

तदेवाग्निस्तदादित्यस्तद्वायुस्तद् चंद्रमाः ।
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्मा ताऽ आपः स प्रजापतिः ॥

- यजु . ३२ । १ ॥

Agni, Aditya, Vayu, Chandrama, Shukra, Brahma, Prajapati etc. are names which are used for referring to the supreme power. Meaning, god got the name Agni(fire) for emitting light, Aditya for being indestructible, Vayu(air) for being inhaled by the world and life, Chandra(moon) by virtue of being joyous, Shukra(Venus) for being pure, Brahma for being the greatest, and Prajapati (lord of the masses) because he takes care of his people. Thus, the Vedas themselves can be used to give proof that various such names have been used for god which are usually names of living men and natural elements. But unfortunately we considered them god and began worshipping those names in place of god. Even today, we call by names while worshipping like mother, father, friend, companion etc. but no one misunderstands that we are worshipping our parents or friend. In the exactly same manner, the instances and prayers for words like sun, moon, Varuna, Indra, fire, air etc. in the Vedas should be inferred to be praying god, and not anything from the inanimate world.

The Vedas have only propagated monotheism. European scholars are also forced to accept this today. They disregard the style of Sayanacharya and other Vedic annotators who were the reason why a lot of western scholars saw an image of polytheism in the Vedas.

Mr. Rath has written in his famous collection's part 1 on pages 4-5. We give a summary here-

He writes, 'The aim of interpreting the Vedas is not to imbibe any meaning given by others but to find out the meanings that were in the minds of the Vedic sages. Sayana sees an imitation of the thoughts of his time in the Vedas. The actual meaning of the Vedas was forgotten by all the scholars ever since olden times, and therefore kept giving the mixture of their own religious views as a part of the translation of the Vedas. 'Mr. Whitney, J.nuir, and Weiber have all supported the above views in their books.

Swami Dayanand was a famous social reformer and translator of the Vedas, belonging to the twentieth century who was a part of the religious community of India over the ages. He has given strong evidences in his 'Rigvedadibhashyabhumika' and the translation of Vedas that the Vedas had

propagated worshipping of a single god only and polytheism is clearly prohibited. Contemporary philosopher Shri Arvind Ghosh has critically compared the writing and style of Sayanacharya and Swami Dayanand. He writes the following in support of Swami Dayanand-

“Swami Dayanand’s thoughts over here are totally clear and cannot be refuted that the Vedas propagate monotheism. There are hundreds of mantras in Vedas like एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति which are evidences for this. Such mantras are found at many places all over all the Vedas, etc. etc.”

The almighty is one, and the mantras illustrated below clearly substantiate this. The following are from Atharva Veda Chapter 13, page 5-

न द्वितीयो न तृतीयश्चतुर्थो नाप्युच्यते । १३ ॥

न पंचमो न षष्ठः सप्तमो नाप्युच्यते । १७ ॥

नाष्टमो न नवमो दशमो नाप्युच्यते । १८ ॥

God is neither second, nor third, nor is he called the fourth. (16)

He is neither fifth, not sixth, nor called the seventh. (17)

He is neither called the eighth, nor the ninth, nor the tenth. (18)

तमिनदं निगतं सः स एष एक एकवृदेक एव । अथर्व २०

He is the supreme power, which is one, and happens once.

Chapter 6

Idol worship and the era of the Ramayana

Historians can make mistakes regarding the exact time when Ramayana was written or took place, but it is known and accepted by all that the events mentioned in the Ramayana took place a long time before the Mahabharata. This was the time when Vedic tradition and Arya tradition had not disappeared. But it is clear that demoniac tendencies like non-vegetarian, drinking alcohol etc. had begun. The evil practices of destroying the sacrifices of ancient sages and saints as per Vedic tradition because of impure stuff like eating meat etc. If it is noticed, it can be seen that the basic plot of the Ramayana is the efforts that were made to protect these very Vedic sacrifices and culture.

All the material related to the Ramayana which is available in any other books today, can all be traced to have originated from the Ramayana written by Valmiki. But whatever Valmiki-written Ramayana books are found today, their chapters, difference in number of shlokas, non-contextual and violating instances make everyone believe that even this scripture does not have a minimal version just like other scriptures. Two kinds of Valmiki Ramayana are found now, one from Mumbai and the other from Bangladesh or Bengal. The former has one chapter (Uttarkand), 93 cantos and 4735 shlokas greater than the latter. Gorreseo is the famous author who translated the Ramayana into Italian. Even this version has just six chapter and is void of 'Uttarkand'. Similarly, Champa Ramayana which was authored at the time of King Bhoj, is a summary of the Valmiki Ramayana and ends with the Yuddhakand. Valmiki has written the importance and greatness of the Ramayana after this chapter in his version. This is written at the beginning or end of any book, and proves that Uttarkand is a summary of the material which is written earlier.

In spite of having the aforementioned projected parts, the Ramayana has the descriptions of Vedic rituals all over, there is no mention of idol worship. Like Manusmriti, the Valmiki Ramayana also substantiates non-vegetarianism and animal sacrifice in some of the shlokas, which clearly shows that the left wing is behind it. But the scarcity of shlokas supporting idol worship is sufficient to

prove that when the different parts were joined, even then idol worship had not begun in this country. Therefore, our belief that idol worship did not exist before the Buddha's era is not baseless.

The following shlokas from the Uttarkand of Valmiki Ramayana are presented in support of idol worship-

यत्र यत्र स्म्याति स्म रावणो राक्षेश्वरः ।

जाम्बूनदमयं लिंगं तत्र तत्रस्म नीयते ॥

Wherever Ravana goes, he takes his golden linga. Similarly, it is written at another instance that बालुका वेदि मध्ये तु । तल्लिंगं स्थाप्य रावणः', meaning, "Ravana established the linga at the altar of sand", etc. firstly, these shlokas are from the Uttarkand, which we have proved to be a projected chapter only using various evidences. But if these are considered right, then this ritual was demoniac. It is also right that the worshipping of Shiv Linga was propagated by the leftists and Ravana was one of them. Thus this does not harm our stand.

The Aryas at that time performed prayers in the morning and the evening, and also offered to the fire. The Valmiki Ramayana vividly describes it. Vishwamitra had told Rama and Lakshmana that –

‘स्नाताश्च कृतजप्याश्च हुतहव्या नरोत्तम’ (१८, सर्ग २३ बाल
काण्ड)

हम लोग स्नान करेंगे और जप करके हवन करेंगे ।’

तथैव गच्छतस्तस्य व्यापायद्रजनी शिवा ।

उपास्य तु शिवां संध्या विषया नत्य गाहत ॥ २ ॥

सर्ग . ४९ अयो काण्ड

He said that they would bathe and perform yajna after enchanting. That fortunate night of Rama got spent, going on in that manner. They prayed in the morning and proceeded to another country.

ततश्चीरोत्तरासङ्गः संध्यामन्वास्य पश्चिमाम् ।
जलमेवाददे भोजयं लक्ष्मणेनाहृतं स्वयम् ॥ ४८ ॥

सर्ग . ५० अयो काण्ड

Thereafter, Rama wrapped himself in a cloth and performed the evening prayer. He drank only the water that Lakshmana had brought.

Rama told Lakshmana-

प्रयागमभितः पश्य सौमित्रे धूममुत्तमम् ।
अग्नेर्भगवतः केतुं मन्ये संहितो मुनिः ॥ ५ ॥

- सर्ग . ५४ अयो काण्ड

Look at the flag of Lord Agni (fire) near Prayag, look at the fragrant incense sticks. This makes me believe that the sage is here itself, has not gone anywhere outside.

Similarly, there are instances of Bharat-Shatrughana performing yajnas and enchanting-

रजन्या प्रभातयां भासते सुहृद्वृताः ।
मंदाकिन्यां हुतं जप्यं कृत्वा रामपुपागमत् ॥

- सर्ग . १०५ अयो काण्ड

After the night had passed, these brothers went to the banks of Mandakini, bathed, and did a yajna, prayed before going near Lord Rama.

In a similar way, the saints and sages to have been said to perform the fire rituals-

वासं चक्रुर्मुनिर्गणाः श्रोणाकूले समाहिताः ।
तेऽस्तं गते दिनकरे स्नात्वा हुतहुतताशनाः ॥ २० ॥

- सर्ग ३१ । बाल काण्ड

The saints performed the prayer, after the sun had and set and they had taken a bath.

Queen Sita also used to perform prayers. Hanuman was searching for Sita when he saw the pond in the Ashok Vatika (the place where she was imprisoned) and said –

संध्याकाल मनाः श्यामा ध्रुवमेष्यति जानकी ।

नदीं चेमां शुभजलां संध्यार्थं वरवर्णिनि ॥ ५० ॥

यदि जीवति सा देवी ताराधिपतिमानना ।

आगमिष्यति साऽवश्यमिमां शीतजला नदीम् ॥ ५१ ॥

- सर्ग १४ । सुंदरकाण्ड

The devoted lady, her highness Sita will come to this holy body of water in the evening. If that beautiful lady is alive, then she will come to this pleasant and cold water pond for sure.

The examples given above are so clear, that they don't require any explanations or comments. These prove that the era of Ramayana was the time of yajnas given in the Vedas, and even that did not have any place for idol worship.

How surprising it is that Lord Rama performed the evening prayer himself, but his devotees worship his idol and consider themselves dutiful! Even the devotees of Lord Buddha stopped following the path shown by him and instead began worshipping his idol. But Buddhists were atheists, they had no got for worshipping in front of them, thus it was not unnatural of them to do this. The sad part is about the devotees of Rama, who did not accept the ideals of Rama in spite of being theists and propagated worshipping his idol.

The description of idol worship in some places of the Ramayana authored by Tulsi, is Shri Tulsidas's personal imagination. He was himself a Vaishnava (worshipper of Vishnu), therefore these instances are only reflections of his own views; it is not based on the Valmiki Ramayana. Neither did Sita worship a goddess at the time of her Swayamvar nor did Rama establish or worship a Shiv-linga in Rameshwaram before building the bridge. The Valmiki Ramayana has just stated that when Rama and Sita were returning from Lanka in the aircraft, Rama tells Sita, pointing towards the place that that was where they had begun constructing the bridge with the blessings of lord Shiva-

एतु दृश्यते तीर्थं सागरस्य महात्मनः ।
सेतुबन्ध इतिख्यातं त्रैलोक्यपरिपूजितम् ॥ २० ॥

एतत्पवित्रं परमं महापातकनाशनम् ।

अत्र पूर्वं महादेवं प्रसादमकरोद्विभुः ॥ २१ ॥ (युद्ध कां . सर्ग
१२५)

The vast seashore that can be seen is called the beginning of the bridge (Setubandh), it is popular in the three worlds. This is an absolutely pure place. The sinners repent for the biggest of their sins over here. This is where the omniscient, biggest of the lords, Lord Shiva blessed us.

The above shlokas have nowhere talked of a Shiv-linga or its installation. It is possible that Tulsidas read the word 'Mahadev' which is a synonym for Lord Shiva and literally means the greatest among gods; and he imagined the installation and worship of a Shiv-Linga.

As we have written earlier, idol worship and anthropomorphism have a base-dependent relation; but even the fact that Lord Rama is an incarnation of god is not proved in the Valmiki Ramayana. Yes, he has been described as similar to Vishnu or a part of Vishnu at some places, but if we give a thought and carefully examine these instances, they appear to have been added later. Otherwise, Lord Rama has himself always declared himself to be a human only multiple times. Rama tells Sita-

या त्वं विरहिता नीता चलचित्तेन रक्षसा ।
डैव सम्पादितो दोषो मानुषेण मया जितः ॥ ५ ॥

When you were kidnapped by the evil minded demon Ravana, it was an act of god which a human like me managed to conquer.

यत्कर्तव्यं मनुष्येण धर्षणा प्रतिमाजिता ।
तत्कृतं रावणं हत्वा मयेदं मानकांक्षिणा ॥ १३ ॥

(युद्ध कां . सर्ग ११५)

By killing Ravana and wanting respect, I only did what any human should do to

erase the insult done to him by his enemy.

अथात्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम् ॥ १३ ॥

(युद्ध कां . सर्ग ११७)

Now I consider myself a human and the son of Dashratha.

Similarly, Sage Narada was describing the qualities of Rama to Valmiki and says that Rama is similar to Parashurama; he did not say that he was Vishnu or an incarnation of Vishnu-

आययः सर्वसमश्चैव सदैक प्रियदर्शनः ।

स च सर्व गुणोपेतः कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनः ॥ १६ ॥

समुद्र इव गाम्भीर्यं धैर्येण हिमवानिव ।

विष्णुना स्तृशो वीर्यं सोम्वत् प्रियदर्शनः ॥ १७ ॥

- बालकाण्ड, स. १

He is an Arya. He is someone who sees everyone equally. He is the one who multiplies the joy of Kausalya, who possesses all qualities. He is similar to the ocean during seriousness, similar to the Himalayas when it comes to patience, similar to Vishnu in his ability and as beautiful and radiant as the moon.

When Rama was mourning after being separated from Sita, that too, did not prove him an incarnation of god but human. This mourning has an emotional illustration in the Valmiki Ramayana. The entire chain shlokas are not given due to the fear of elongating too much but a few lines are given below-

एवं संविलपन् रामः सीतहरणकर्षितः ।

दीनः शोक-समाविष्टो मुहूर्तं विह्वलोऽभवत् ॥ २९ ॥

सन्तप्तो ह्यावसन्नाडो गतबुद्धितसः ।

निषसादातुरो दीनो निःश्वस्याशीतमायतम् ॥ ३० ॥ (आ का.

सर्ग ५९)

Rama was mourning the kidnapping of Sita in this way, was full of remorse and had become anxious for a while. Rama used to be calm and composed usually but contrary to that, he became anxious out of sorrow and took a deep breath before sitting down.

स राजपुत्रः प्रियया विहीनः कामेन शोकेन छ पीड्यमानः ।

विषादयं भ्रातरमार्तरूपो भूयो विषादं प्रविवेश तीव्रम् ॥ १ ॥

न मद्वितो दुष्कृतकर्मकारी मन्ये द्वितीयोऽस्ति वसुंधरायाम् ।

शोकेन शोको हि परम्पराया मामेति भिन्दन् हृदयं मनश्च ॥ ३ ॥

पूर्वं मया नूनमभोप्सितानि पापानि कर्मण्यसकृतकृतानि ।

तत्रायमद्यापततो विपाको दुःखेन दुःखं यदहं विशामि ॥

राज्यप्रणाशः स्वजनैर्वियोगः पितुर्विनाशो जननीवियोगः ।

सर्वाणी मे लक्ष्मण शोकवेगमापूरयन्ति प्रविचिन्तितानि ॥ ५ ॥

Rama, royal prince was separated from his beloved, and was full of sorrow and sadness when he said the following to Lakshmana – I am aware that there is no one else on this earth who has done bad deeds. This sorrow is received by me as a result of that, this sorrow has affected my mind and my heart. I have definitely committed sins that I wanted to many times. It is a result of them that I got that, in which I get to experience one sorrow after another. Oh Lakshmana! The fall of my kingdom, the division of my family, the death of my father, the memories of my mother altogether deepen my grief.

After this, Rama expresses ignorance and worry just like humans and says that the demons must have killed and eaten Sita. When Rama sees Jatayu lying on the ground, he says that there is no doubt that it ate Sita. Now he is peacefully resting after having eaten her. I will kill him using my arrows, etc. this section of the Valmiki Ramayana strongly proves that Rama was a human being. Being sad as a result of separation from Sita, blaming all his past misdeeds the reason for all his sorrows, and not knowing facts like who took Sita, where is she now, is she alive or dead-all these are evidences that are sufficient to prove that Rama was not an incarnation of god.

Thus, not only was idol worship less known during the Ramayana era but even the feeling of considering Rama an incarnation of god had not been implanted.

All these imaginations spread in this country only after the rise of communities like the Vaishnava in the ancient times. On one hand this imagination has pulled god into the category of mortal beings whereas on the other it called Rama god as a result of which his principles and ideals no longer remain something for common men to imitate. They started believing that Rama was god, how can we do the same! The harm that these thoughts caused to this nation, that is far beyond imagination.

Chapter 7

Idol Worship and Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is said to have taken place a little more than five thousand years ago. This is far later than the time of Ramayana. The Aryas in the Ramayana era followed the Vedic rules, but during the Mahabharata an open violation had begun. Sacrifice and perseverance were replaced by laziness and enjoyment. Being cunning was no longer considered a sin. Yudhishtira, who was known as the 'Dharmaraja' (or king of righteousness) used to openly play gambling in the royal meeting. Thus the community which taught the world the lesson of righteousness once upon a time was now swiftly moving towards decline.

Just like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata too is no behind in terms of projected sections. It would be no exaggeration to say that the current version of the Mahabharata epic has increased multifold compared to the original one written by Ved Vyas.

The number of shlokas in the Mahabharata is currently 95426. But is it clear from the proof of Mahabharata itself that Vyas had written twenty-four thousand shlokas –

चतुर्विंशति साहस्रीं चक्रे भारत संहिताम् ।
उपाख्यानैर्विना तावद् भारतं प्रोच्यते बुधैः ॥

- आदि. १ । १०१ ॥

Maharshi Vyas has made the Bharat-sanhita or the code of India comprising of twenty four thousand shlokas. In the absence of anecdotes, the wise people call this much 'Bharat'. On the contrary, a few people try to prove the number of shlokas to be 8800 only by giving another shloka-

अष्टौश्लोक सहस्राणि अष्टौश्लोक शैतानि च ।

अहं वेही शुको वेत्ति सञ्जयो वेत्ति वा न वा ॥

- आदि . १ । ८१ ॥

I know eight thousand eight hundred shlokas, the parrot knows too. I don't know whether Sanjay knows or does not know.

The reason behind the multifold increase in the shloka count, can be found in the Mahabharata itself. Charioteer Ugrashrava, son of charioteer Lomaharshan says that एकशसहस्रन्तु मयोतां वै निबोधत ।

“Consider one lakh shlokas from my side”. This proves that there was a time when this shloka count had crossed one lakh also.

Swami Dayanand has given another proof in this regard in his Satyarthprakash on the basis of Raja Bhoj authored ‘Sanjeevani Itihaas’ (the history of Sanjeevani). It has been written in this that “Vyas wrote 4440 and his disciples wrote 5600, meaning total 10000 was the count in the Mahabharata. That reached twenty thousand at the time of his majesty Vikramaditya. Emperor Bhoj says that it was 25 during his father's reign, and now in half my age there is a Mahabharata available comprising of thirty thousand shlokas,” etc.

An alternate evidence available in this regard is the Garuda Purana which proves the shloka count in the Mahabharata is just six thousand-

दैत्याः सर्वे विप्रकुलेषु भूत्वा कृतेयुगे भारते षट्सहस्रयाम् ।

निष्कास्य काञ्चिवनिर्मितानां निवेशनं तत्र कुर्वन्ति नित्यम् ॥

In the Krit era, all the demons who took birth in Brahmin communities take away some parts of the Mahabharata of six thousand shlokas and keep interfering in the remaining parts.

The above evidences prove that Mahabharata, originally known as ‘Jaya’ first, ‘Bharat’ next and ‘Mahabharata’ later possibly due to an increase in the number of shlokas – it is difficult to decide that it has so many postiches – how big is the original writing? The facts that are true regarding the Mahabharata, the same hold true in regard of the Geeta also. The Bhagvad Gita is a subset of the Mahabharata itself. There is no translation found before the interpretation given by Shankar Swami, which proves that the Gita did not have an independent existence, as a scripture, outside of Mahabharata prior to that. Also it is neither

possible nor rational for such an elaborate and digressed discourse by Lord Krishna in the form of Gita right at the time of the battle. It was sufficient to motivate Arjuna to fight the battle by proving the immortality of the soul, which is clear from the second chapter of the Gita. Therefore it is our belief that there is no dearth of additions made later to the Gita as well.

We do not wish to go into further detail on this subject, because it is not a subject predicable by us. Our aim here is just to prove that in spite of having so many exaggerated parts in the Mahabharata and the Gita, both of them do not have a single shloka in support of idol worship. In fact, there is a shloka in the Mahabharata clearly refuting idol worship-

मृच्छला धातुदार्वादि मूर्तवीश्वरबुद्धयः ।
क्लिश्यन्ति तपसा मूढाः परां शान्तिं न यांति ते ॥

Foolish people consider idols made of clay, stone, metal or wood as god. Such people can never attain peace of mind.

Popular Indian historian Raibahadur Chintamani Vinayak Vaidya has elaborately described this topic in his book 'Bharatmimaansa'. He is also of the opinion that idol worship was not prevalent in this country till the time of Mahabharata. We present that for our readers to contemplate in his own words cited below-

It is clearly seen in the Mahabharata that every Arya Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya (the castes) performed yajnas and prayers every day. At least there is no shortage of such descriptions in the stories of Indian warriors. It cannot be seen anywhere that Rama and Lakshmana forget praying in time. Similarly, the poet did not forget mentioning the prayers performed by Lord Krishna while describing the incident of Krishna going for agreement -

प्रातरुत्थाय कृष्णस्तु कृतवान्सर्वाहिनिकम् ।
ब्रह्मणैरभ्यनुज्ञाता प्रययौ नगरं प्रति ॥

- महा. उद्योग पर्व अ. १३

One main part of the prayer was 'Upasthan' which is done by chanting Vedic mantras. It is written that Indians used to get ready on the battlefield during battle time only after having a bath early morning followed by prayers. The

battle took place at night only once and all the soldiers took rest on the field itself. That time has been described as that battle began even before sunrise that day. But when the sun rose, then entire military stop battling. Thereafter all the soldiers performed prayers and worshipped the sun in the battlefield itself. This shows the importance of prayers and the worship of sun in the Mahabharata era. It is written in the chapter Drona Parva, 186 that – “the solar system began to be seen as a golden circle in the east as a result of the golden sun; that is when the warriors of both the sides, the Kauravas and the Pandavas, left their respective chariots, horses, palanquins, faced the sun and started praying”.

“The second duty was offerings to the fire. It is definitely proven that every person who was an Arya used to keep an installation of fire in their home. We have already shown earlier the description of Yudhishtira in the 82nd chapter of the Drona Parva. Yudhishtira used to wake up early morning, then performed prayers after bathing, and then finally did not forget going to the yajna-room and offer customary prayers while enchanting Vedic mantras-

समिद्धिश्च पवित्राभिरग्निमाहुतिभिस्तदा ।
मंत्रपूताभिरर्चित्वा निश्चक्राम ततो गृहात् ॥

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“Similarly, when Lord Krishna leaves for hastinapur in the 8th chapter of ‘Udyog Parva’, that is described as-

कृत्वा पौर्वाहिकं कृत्यं स्नातः शुचिरलंकृतः ।
उपस्थिते विवस्वन्तं पावकं च जनार्दनः ॥

It is written that Lord Krishna and Yudhishtira performed prayers, gave charity to the Brahmins etc. (pages 447-448). He expresses his views on idol worship and writes-

“This fact is indisputable that there is no description of idol worship in this description. Although Lord Krishna and Yudhishtira’s acts of praying are described in detail, even then there is no description of any god’s metal or stone idol being worshipped. If worshipping idols of gods was a part of prayers that time, then that topic would have definitely found a mention. Therefore, it can be

definitely approximated that in the era of the Indian battle and Mahabharata, idol worship of any kind or of any god had not been included in the prayer culture of the Aryas. No home had begun the practice of keeping idols at home and worshipping them. Different aphorisms also did not suggest the practice of worshipping gods. This makes it indisputable that the practice of worshipping gods developed in the many years following the Mahabharata era.” (Page 448-449). He reiterates further, “But a lot of description is found in the Mahabharata regarding temples and idols placed inside temples. It is true that the original Vedic religion had no importance given to temples or idols, nor were idols a part of people’s routine religious practices. The new chapters which are added to the Mahabharata by ‘Saudi’ are the ones which contain descriptions of temples and idols” (page 449) “Although temples and idols have existed, but the religious practices of the Aryas had not yet imbibed worshipping gods – this fact can be seen in the Mahabharata and domestic sources also” (page 450, line 27-29)

At the end he writes in the epilogue –

“All that has been said till now boils down to that the religion of Indian Aryas during the Mahabharata war was only based on the Vedas, so during the Mahabharata era this religion included gods other than the Vedic gods; and Indra was left behind in the Vedic gods and idols of Shiva and Vishnu began to be made. The two to three thousand years that passed between the Indian war and the Mahabharata, it was inevitable that Indian religion transformed during this period. (Here the author refers to the time when Mahabharata war took place as the ‘Indian war’; and Mahabharata era refers to the time, two-three thousand years later, when newer parts after the war description were added and this epic took shape as ‘Mahabharata’ as its presently known – Author). “The main practices of worship during the Vedic era were prayer and yajna. Studying the Vedas was present and prevalent among all the three castes, but a religion had established when the society and religion of the Aryas and non-Aryas has transformed. This religion maintained the study of Vedas and yajnas for the Brahmins, but the worship of Shiva, Vishnu and Durga became prevalent among the other castes. Additionally, idols and temples for these gods began to be constructed at this time. The devotion towards numerous souls and spirits came into existence among the ignorant, and it is also clear that it is prohibited to worship the stupas of the Buddhists.” (Page 455) It is clear from the above examples given by the wise author that idol worship became prevalent within the two-three thousand years following the Mahabharata war. The prohibition of

worshipping the Buddhist stupas also proves that this blending in the Mahabharata took place in the Buddhist era, when worshipping their stupas had become prevalent.

The creative creations of painters and sculptors are respectable in the eyes of art just like the figurative creations of poets. The Saraswati, Lakshmi and Mahakali (goddesses) idols of ancient times are beautiful creations of art. The picture of 'Bharat Mata' (India depicted as a goddess) in present times is also a similar piece of imagination. What are the satirical pictures regularly published in newspapers and magazines? The outcome of artists' imagination! There is neither anything wrong in it nor any harm. There are effigies of great men established at many places in the West, but no one considers them worshippers of idols because of this. The harm begins when we began considering them living and intelligent and start worshipping them, or consider them god and a means to enlightenment of our soul by praying to them. It is possible that these idols were placed in temples and mansions at that time as pieces of art or respecting the brave. This alone does not prove idol worship till the time it is not explicitly said that people went to those temples and prayed to them.

God has been called formless and shapeless in the Mahabharata and incarnation has also been refuted. It is clear from the following shlokas-

मनीषी मनसा विप्रः दृश्यत्यात्मानमात्मनि ॥ १५ ॥

न ह्यायं चक्षुषा दृश्यो न च सर्वरपीन्द्रियैः ।

मानसा तु प्रदीपेन महानात्मा प्रकाशते ॥ १६ ॥

अशब्दस्पर्शरूपं तदरसागन्धमव्ययम् ।

अशरीरं शरीरेषु निरीक्षेत निरिन्द्रियम् ॥ १७ ॥

- शांतिपर्व अ . २३६

Oh Brahmin! A sage looks at god in his own soul. This is neither visible to the eyes nor felt by any of the senses. It can be seen only by the lamp of mind. (16). that god is free of words, touch, form, taste, odor, is indeclinable and present in the body. Look at the one without formless or sense. (17)

Shrimad Bhagwat contains the description of yajna, sacrifice, yoga, self-study etc. only; not of idol worship or any form of inanimate worship-

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपः क्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मावादीनां ॥ २४ ॥
तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपः क्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधा क्रियन्ते मोक्षकांक्षिभिः ॥ २५ ॥

This is why 'Om' is enchanted and practices like yajna, charity, perseverance take place regularly and continuously among the Vedic people. (24) Oh Arjuna! Those who desire heaven, don't expect the fruits but carry on activities like yajna, sacrifice and charity in various forms while enchanting holy words. (25) Yajna refers to offering the fire itself, it is clear from the below shloka-

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत्प्रेत्य नो इह ॥ २८ ॥

Oh Arjuna! Yajna performed without dedication, charity given, sacrifice made and anything done without dedication, and is called as 'untrue'. Such deeds are neither beneficial in this world nor in the other world.

Lord Krishna has again declared yajna as duty to be performed always and regularly. This is what is called as purifier of human mind-

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥

Yajna, charity and sacrifice are not worth condemning. These must be performed because these are the things which purify humans.

At the end, Lord Krishna addresses Arjuna while describing ways of attaining god –

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्मो तथाप्नोति नीबोध मे ।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥ ५० ॥
बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्यात्मानं नियम्य च ।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा राग द्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥ ५२ ॥

Oh Arjuna! Listen to how a man with a clear mind attains Brahma, and listen to the biggest dedication towards knowledge in brief. (50). A man can attain god by having a pure mind, controlling mind by strength of the soul, leaving topics like touch and words, and sacrificing jealousy and enmity. (51). One who likes solitude, has regulated food, and who has won the body, speech and mind and is busy in remembering god and enriching his mind, who has accepted quietness, is the one who attains Brahma. (52).

Shri Shankaracharya, while interpreting ‘Siddhi Prapto’ etc. fiftieth shloka, refutes the argument which is presented in support for idol worship, that is - the mind cannot accept the formless god and therefore an idol is required. He writes –

केचित्तु पण्डितम्मन्या निराकारत्वादात्मवस्तु नोपैति बुद्धिरतो
दुःसाध्यसमयग् ज्ञाननिष्ठे त्याहुः । सत्यमेवं
गुरुसम्प्रदायरहिताम् , अश्रुतवेदान्तानाम्, अत्यन्त
बहिर्विषयासक्तबुद्धिनाम्, समयक् प्रमाणेष्वकृतश्रमाणाम्” ।

Some learned people say that human mind cannot accept and understand as a result of being formless, this is why the knowledge about god is not pragmatic. It is fine that people who have not had teacher-student tradition, who have never heard of the Vedas, whose mind is busy in external issues, who have not done any hard work regarding justice and proof, they are the ones who remember god in this way.

Lord Krishna was neither god nor an incarnation, he himself refutes this in the Gita-

बहुनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ ४ । ५ ॥

Oh Arjuna! Both of us have taken many births, spent many lives. I am aware of all those; but you are not aware.

It is such a straightforward evidence that proves Lord Krishna as a living being who is trapped in the repeating cycle of life and death. Lord Krishna was wise and knew that living beings are mortal and always caught in life-death. Alternately, it can be said that he was learned and knew of rebirth while Arjuna did not possess this knowledge. But he was definitely human, not god; otherwise

there would be no mention of multiple births.

Thus, idol worship was not prevalent in this country until Mahabharata and Gita were authored; nor was it a part of the prayer rituals of the people here.

Chapter 8

Idol Worship and the Ancient Era

This country went into spiraling decline the battle of Mahabharata. The country got divided into many small states and everyone began committing sins in the name of religion or righteousness. The 'Tantra' scriptures came into existence during this period and leftism became prevalent everywhere. During the times of Ramayana, yajnas were considered lapsed if flesh etc. was accidentally involved, whereas now those yajnas were performed by sacrificing animals. Different types of yajnas like 'Ashwamedh', 'Gomedh', and 'Narmedh' involved sacrificing horses, cows and humans respectively. The phrase "Vedic violence is not violence" was made prevalent and became the cover for all kinds of violence. This era can be called an era of great decline of this country from a religious perspective. The demons which Rama struggled and fought to oust them were the ones who were ruling at this time. Some tantric people began roaming with a necklace of skulls around their necks and a bowl made of human skull in their hands. The graveyard was their home and human flesh their food. People considered them certified great men and began to worship them. But even in this era of religious decline, idol worship did not become prevalent in this country, instead yajnas alone were propagated in a distorted form.

The birth of Jainism and Buddhism was a reaction to this pitiable state. As we have written earlier, this was the time when foreigners came to this country and their arrival and contact gave rise to idol worship. Slowly, leftist violent yajnas were replaced by idol worship.

Lord Buddha prohibited yajnas and laid great emphasis on good behavior in life. Idol worship finds no mention in his teachings anywhere. But later idol worship became prevalent among the Buddhists also as a result of coming in contact with foreigners. Buddhism also got partitioned into different communities and the entire glory of the Buddhism era moved towards helter-skelter.

Shri Shankaracharya tried establishing the Vedic religion once again around this time. This was mainly based on the Upanishads, Vedanta, and the Gita, all of

which are still known as 'Prastantrayi'. Shankara Swami refuted idol worship and tried ousting from the country along with Buddhism, but was not successful. He has strongly condemned idol worship in this book 'Parapooja' in the following words –

१. पूर्णस्यावाहनं कुत्र सर्वाधारस्य वासनम् ।

स्वच्छस्य पाद्य मर्ध्यञ्च शुद्धस्याचमनं कुतः ॥

२. सर्वादधारो निराधारोः सर्वव्यापक ईश्वरः ।

प्राणादि प्रेरकत्वेन जीवने हेतुरेव च ॥

पुराणवाक्यम् -

३. अधमा प्रतिमा पूजा स्तोत्रजाप्यं च माध्यमा ।

उत्तमा निगमा पूजा सोऽहं पूजा महात्मनः ॥

४. तीर्थेषु पशुयज्ञेषु काष्ठ पाषाण मृन्मये ।

प्रतिमायां मनो येषां ते नरा मूढचेतसः ॥

५. पाषाणैरालयं बध्वा देवः पाषाण एव च ।

ब्रूहि पण्डित! देवस्तु कस्मिन् स्थाने स तिष्ठति ॥

६. स्वगृहे पायसं त्यक्त्वा भिक्षामिच्छति ।

शिलामृतदारुचित्रेषु देवता बुद्धिकल्पिता ॥

७. निर्मलस्य कुतः स्नानं वस्त्रं विश्वोदरस्य च ।

निरालम्बस्योपवीतं च रम्यस्याभरणं कुतः ॥

८. निर्लेपस्य कुतो गन्धं पुष्पं निर्वासनस्य च ।

निर्गन्धस्य कुतो धूपं स्वप्रकाशस्य दीपकम् ॥

९. नित्यतृप्तस्य नैवेद्यं निष्कामस्य फलं कुतः ।

ताम्बूलं च विभो कुत्र नित्यानन्दस्य दक्षिणा ॥

१०. स्वयं प्रकाशमानस्य कुतो नीराञ्जनं विधिः ।

प्रदक्षिणाह्यानन्तस्य चाद्वितीयस्य का नतिः ॥

११. अंतर्बहिश्च पूर्णस्य कथमुद्वासनं भवेत् ।

इयमेव परापूजा शम्भोः सत्यपरायणः ॥

१२. देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तो जीवो देवः सनातनः ।

त्यजेदज्ञाननिर्मालयं सोऽहंभावेन पूजयेत् ॥

1. What is evocation for the complete? What is seat for the base of all? What is offering and verse for the clean? What is rinsing for the pure?
2. The almighty is the preponderant, baseless and omniscient. It is the motivation of the soul and the reason for life.
3. It is a sentence of the Puranas – idol worship is lowly, enchanting the mantras is mediocre, worshipping the Vedas is superior, worshipping the great men is of Highest order
4. The man whose mind is into pilgrimage, animal sacrifice, and idols made of wood, stone or clay.
5. Oh priest! Tell us where god resides? You have confined him to one place by stone and made god of stone.
6. Oh foolish! You leave behind delicacies at your home and beg around! You call art made of stone, wood and clay to be god.
7. Why does the pure need a bath? Why does the one who gives shelter to the world need clothes? Why does the baseless need a sacred thread? And why does the elegant need ornaments?
8. How is fragrance important for the incense? How are flowers important for the cloth-less? How is incense stick important for the odourless? What is the need for a lamp for the self-radiant?
9. What is the meaning of offering for the ever satisfied? What is the need of fruits for the still? What is the meaning of betel for the eternal? And what is the need of offering for the evergreen joy?
10. What is the need to show a lamp for the self-radiant? What is the need to circumambulator the infinite? What is the need to bow to the unparalleled?
11. What is the meaning of immersion for the one who is inside and outside? The following is the correct way to worship the almighty-
12. Make this body a temple and consider living being itself to be god, abandon the remains of ignorance and pray with dedication.

Thus Shri Shankara Swami has refuted the god having a form again and again in his interpretations. We provide some citations from the translation of the Vedant-

नैकस्मिन्न संभावात् । ” (वेदान्त २ । २ । ३३)

Shri Swami interprets this as –

“न्ह्योकस्मिन् धर्मणि युगपत् सदसत्वादिविरुद्धधर्मसमावेशः

संभवति शीतोष्णत् ।

“The same object cannot possess two opposing qualities at the same time just like heat and cold cannot coexist”.

The meaning is that having a form and being formless are two opposite qualities which the Brahma cannot possess simultaneously.

न स्थानतोऽपि परस्योभयलिङ्गं सर्वत्र हि । (वेदान्त ३ । २ ।

११)

He translates this and writes –

तत्रोभयलिङ्गं श्रुत्यनुप्रहादुभयलिङ्गं भवेद्ब्रह्मोत्थं प्राप्ते ब्रूमः । न

तावत् स्वत एव परस्य ब्राह्मणः उभयलिङ्गमुपपद्यते ।

नह्योक्तं वस्तु स्वत एव रूपादि विशेषोपेतं तद्विपरीतं

चेत्यवधायितुं शक्यं विरोधात् ।**** सर्वत्र हि

ब्रह्मास्वरूपप्रतिपादनपरेषु वाक्येषु ‘अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपाव्ययम्’।

(Two forms of the Brahma are found in the Upanishads, one that has a form and one that does not; this question has been answered by Shankara Swami in this interpretation of his -) The Brahma cannot have two different forms. There is nothing in which two opposite qualities, like formless and form, can together reside because these two qualities are mutually opposites. All the sentences that describe Brahma found anywhere have called him free of words, touch, form and fault, and indeclinable.

करणवच्चेन्न भोगादिभ्यः ।

- वेदान्त सूत्र २ । २ । ४०

“शरीरत्वे सति सांसारिवद् भोगादि प्रसङ्गादीश्वरस्यापि

अनीश्वरत्वं प्रसज्येत।”

If god has a form and a body, then he too will lose qualities of god in spite of being god and will resemble any ordinary human being who has desires.

Shankar Swami criticizes ‘Ganesh-Pooja’ (worshipping Lord Ganesha) and says that –

“भो गाणपत्य! सत्यामुक्तं भवता गणपतेः सर्वोत्तमत्वं

वनमथावलाद्-

रुद्राद्युप्तत्तिश्चेति भवद्धिः प्रतिपादितं किल तदसमञ्जसम् ।

कथं सगुणस्य गजमुखस्य गणपतेः रुद्रगणैः स लयोनुगस्य

जगत्-कारणत्वं कल्पितमुचितम् ।

किञ्च रुद्रसुत इतिलोके प्रसिद्धरस्ति तस्य ब्रह्मणत्वं कल्पिते

पित्रादिकारणत्वं सुतस्यानुचितमेव, अतो रुद्रादिकारणं परब्रह्मैव

“सदैव सौम्येदमग्र आसीत् इत्यादि वाक्यात्” ।

- शंकरदिग्विजय. पृष्ठ ८४

Oh worshipper of Ganapati (Ganesha)! Your belief that Ganesha is the most superior is not true. The portent Ganesha, having the head of an elephant and the one who comes into existence and destroys by the people of Shiva, how can he be the parent of the world? He is popular in this world because he is the son of Rudra/Lord Shiva. If you consider him the Brahma, then he will not be the parent for the worshippers of Shiva because he is the son. Therefore, Brahma only is the parent of Rudra, etc. An evidence from the Upanishad is ‘He was the past of the nature in true form.

Many such evidences can be given from the interpretations of Shankar, but we do not present them here due to the fear of elaboration. But the efforts of Shri Shankaracharya against idol worship were all in vain and with the decline of Buddhism, different kinds of idols began to be made in this country which replaced the idols of Buddha and the Jain Tirthankara. A lot of Puranas also came into existence during this period itself. The outlines of idol worship as in Hinduism at present, rituals, festivals, pilgrimage, caste system by birth, were all laid around this time. The three major communities – Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Shaktas came into existence during this period of time. The eighteen Puranas are scriptures based on these three communities alone. The importance given to idol worship, incarnations, and pilgrimage given by the Puranas representative of Vaishnava communities is far greater than that given by the other two communities.

It is likely, from a study of the Puranas that the scholars of that time also opposed idol worship. They had either publicly condemned it, or prohibited it

among the wise by calling it a thing of the ignorant, foolish and lower class people. The Brahmins did not accept the task of worshipping in the temples, and if someone agreed to perform as a result of greed, then they were ousted from the caste. Some such evidences from the Puranas are given below-

प्राप्ते कलावहह दुष्टरे च काले ।
न त्वां भजन्ति मनुजा ननु वञ्चितास्ते ।
धूर्तैः पुराणचतुरैर्हरि-शंकराणां,
सेवापराश्च वहिस्तास्तव निर्मितानां ॥ १२ ॥

In this atrocious Kaliyug (modern times), the clever people gave birth to the Puranas and worshipping Vishnu, Shiva etc. to earn a living.

नाम्बमयानि तीर्थानि न देवा मृच्छलामयाः ।
न ते पुनन्त्युरुकालेन दर्शनादेव साधवः ॥ ११ ॥
नाग्निर्न सूर्यो न च चन्द्रतारकाः ;
न भूर्जलं खं स्वशनोऽथ वाङ्मनः ।
उपासिता भेदकृता हरन्त्यघं,
विपश्चितो घ्नन्ति मुहूर्तसेवयाः ॥ १२ ॥
यस्यात्मबुद्धिं कुण्ठे त्रिधातुके, स्वधी कल्त्रादिषु भौम इज्यथीः ।
यत्तीर्थबुद्धिः सलिलेन कर्हिचित् जनेष्वभिज्ञेषु स एव गोखरः ॥
१३ ॥

- श्रीमद् भागवद्. स्क. १० अ. ८४

Water bodies are not places of pilgrimage, idols of clay and stone are not god. They don't purify anyone even in a long time. Purity can be attaining by meeting the great and learned men. (1). Sins cannot be washed away by praying to things like fire, sun, moon, stars, earth, water, sky, air, voice etc. Worshipping these separates one from the god. Even the slightest things done for wise men help in washing sins away. (12). The one who looks for self-knowledge in this body made of air, bile, and mucus, intellect in women, god in idols made of earth, and pilgrimage in water- such a person is 'gokhar' or the donkey who carries food

for the cows.

Similarly, Kapildev, who is counted as among the incarnations, says that –

अहं सर्वेषु भूतेषु भूतात्मावस्थितः सदा ।
तमवज्ञाय मां मर्त्यः कुरुतेऽर्चा विडम्बनम् ॥ २१ ॥
यो मां सर्वेषु भूतेषु सन्तमात्मानमीश्वरम् ।
हित्वार्चा भजते मायाद् भस्मन्येव जुहोति सः ॥ २२ ॥
अहमुच्चावचैर्द्रव्यैः क्रिययोप्तन्नयाऽनघे ।
नैव तुष्येऽर्चितोऽर्चायांभूतप्रामावमानिनः ॥ २४ ॥
- श्रीमद् भागवद्. स्क. ३ अ. २९

I am present as the spirit in all the creatures. It is an irony that people disrespect me and worship my idols. I am the one who resides in everyone's body. Men who abandon me and worship images, are the ones who offer the ashes of their ignorance to the yajna fire. (22). Oh Mother! I am not satisfied by small-big elements, prayers, rituals and I don't become happy by those who insult the living beings. (24)

न्हयाम्बमयानि तीर्थानि न देवा मृच्छलामयाः ।
ते पुनन्तयपि कालेन विष्णुभक्ता क्षणादहो ॥ ४२ ॥
- देवी भागवत, स्कं ९. अ . ७

19 Jan

Water bodies are not places of pilgrimage, gods are not made of stone and clay, all these do not purify in any point of time.

तीर्थानि तोयपूर्णानि देवान् पाषाणमृन्मयान् ।
योगिनो न प्राप्दयन्ते स्वात्मप्रत्ययकारणात् ॥
- शिवपुराण दे . सं . ३९ । २९ ॥

Places of pilgrimage full of water and gods made of stone and clay are not accepted by the saints as per their belief.

The Shivpurana has stated different ways of worshipping Shiv Lingas made of different metals and different colors. But at present, only Lingas of stone are prevalent all over the country, which was meant only for the lowermost castes according to the Shivpurana. “शिलालिङ्गं तु शूद्राणां महाशुद्धिकरं शुभम्” ॥ ४९ ॥ also proves that the famous Shiv Linga worship is meant for the Shoodras or the lowermost strata of people in the caste system.

Emperor Ashoka’s minister and popular strategist Chanakya has also said that idol worship is meant for the less intellectual-

अग्निर्देवो द्विजातीनां मुनीनां हृदि दैवम् ।

प्रतिमा स्वल्पबुद्धिनां सर्वत्र सम दर्शिनः ॥ १९ ॥

- चाणक्यनीति. अ. ४

Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas have the fire as their god, the sages have god in their hearts. God resides in the idols for the less intelligent and god is everywhere for the impartial.

The Puranas contain condemning words for the priests and suggestions to oust them from the community. In the Varaha Purana, there is a list containing names of Brahmins who should not be served during death rituals, and temple priests find a mention in this list.

वृषली सूतिपोष्यश्च वृषलीपतिरेव च ।

तथादेवलकश्चैव श्राद्धे नार्हन्ति केतनम् ॥ ७ । १४ ॥

The woman with bad behavior, her husband, a new mother, and temple priests are not deserving of finding a place in the death rituals and feast.

Padmapurana, a ‘Vaishnava’ purana, harshly directs abandons worshipping, touching, and offering in front of idols of gods other than Vishnu-

नान्यं देवं तु विक्षेत ब्राह्मणो न च पूजयेत् ।
नान्यं प्रसादं भुंजीत नान्यस्ययातं विशेत् ॥ ६३ ॥
इतरेषां तु देवानां निर्माल्यं गर्हितं भवेत् ।
सकृदेव हि योऽश्नाति ब्राह्मणो जानदुर्बलः ॥ ९७ ॥
निर्माल्यं शङ्करादीनां स चाण्डालो भवेद् ध्रुवम् ।
कल्पकोटि सहस्राणि पच्यते नरकाग्निना ॥ ९८ ॥
निर्माल्यं भो द्रविजश्रेष्ठाः रुद्रादीनां दिवौकसाम् ।
रक्षो यक्ष पिशाचान्नं मद्यमांस-समं स्मृतं ॥ ९९ ॥

Meaning, the brahmins should neither look at another god nor worship it; neither have Prasad in its name nor go to its temple. They should not even have the Prasad remaining after offering to it. A foolish Brahmin eating this as good as eating dung. The one who worships Shiva and others is definitely untouchable. He burns in the fire of hell for crores of years. Oh Brahmins! The Prasad of Shiva and other gods is comparable to meat and alcohol.

The Bhavishya Purana is considered to be newest than all others. This is predictions like the Muslim invasion and the arrival of the British. This is sufficient to prove that this purana is the latest. This purana has an extremely interesting story, which can prove that the brahmins considered praying in temples condemnable until a few centuries ago.

Lord Krishna's son Saamba, in order to free himself of his father's curse, constructed a huge temple of the sun god and established an idol inside that on the suggestion of Narada. This is the interesting story whose important part from the Bhavishya Purana has been cited in brief-

Saamba says that oh Narada! I saw the sun god himself on your request but I have a concern that who will worship and protect this idol, please tell me this to drive away my fears. Hearing this Narada said that oh Saamba, no Brahmin will accept this task, because brahmins who use money earned from god to earn a living they are called condemnable and are outcast from society like the Shoodras. Those who earn money through god and brahmins are sent to hell, there they receive leftovers of food eaten by vultures and therefore no Brahmin would agree to become a prayer of god. Now you should ask the sun god himself who will perform the rituals regularly; or ask the priest of king Ugrasen who might accept this task. Hearing this, Samba went to the priest, Gaurmukha's

home. Gaurmukha had just finished his evening prayer and was relaxing in his home. Samba bowed to him and said Sir! I have made a temple for the sun god, placed an idol of the sun god with his wife in it and rehabilitated a city in my name. Now it is my request that you accept this. Hearing this Gaurmukha said that Oh Samba, we are brahmins and you are the king. If we accept what you are saying, then our identity will be destroyed and we will become outcast like the Shudras. I will become a demon in another birth and you too will have to face the curse. If such people sit in a place and have food, that place becomes impure and cannot be purified without performing special rituals. If such people help someone in their rituals, then their fathers are disrespected. Brahmins perform all other rituals but they should not accept the ritual of worshipping an idol of god. (Bhavishya Purana, B.C. 133, Navalkishor Printing Press Lucknow, June 1891)

Around eleven hundred years ago, Alberuni, a famous traveler in history, stayed in this county for 30-40 years and translated many Sanskrit writings to Arabic. We can prove our belief too. He has described all the communities in the 11th chapter of his book “Kitab-ul-Hind”. He has described in detail the image of all gods and has presented his views regarding idol worship as well. He says that “this practice of idol worship is followed by the commoners and ignorant people of India, otherwise educated Hindus do not believe in it”. (The India of Alberuni)

Similarly, the author of Crawford’s history of the Indian Archipelago, 1820, vol. II and Journal of Indian Archipelago vol. II, III, IV, Mr. Crawford has cited the history of the Indian islands. These prove that after Buddhism emerged in the Lakshadweep islands, some Hindus went and settled in Bali. They completely follow Hinduism till date. “They are divided into four castes – brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shoodras, like the ancient Hindus. Hindu kings rule their even today. Brahmins are vegetarian. They are respected just like they were here. “The Brahmins do not indulge in idol worship”. This proves clearly that brahmins and other wise people did not get involved in idol worship even after it had become popular in this country and they considered it condemnable”.

On one hand there are representations of idol worship and incarnation in the Puranas, whereas on the other hand here are instances where god has been clearly stated to be formless, omnipresent and immortal. The latter shake the foundation of idol worship and incarnations and amidst this communal storm also glimpses of ancient Vedic principles can be seen. Some such shlokas from the Puranas are given below-

निर्गुणस्य मुने रूपं न भवेद् दृष्टिगोचरम् ।
दृश्यं च नश्वरं यस्मादरूपं दृश्यते कथम् ॥ ८ ॥

- दे. भा. स्क. ३. अ. ७

Brahma says Oh Sage! The formless cannot be seen by the eyes. The reason is that sight is destructible. How can the property-less be seen?

एको व्यापी समः शुद्धो निर्गुणः प्रकृतेः परः ।
जन्म-वृद्ध्यादिरहित आत्मा सर्वगतोऽव्ययः ॥ २८ ॥
परं ज्ञानमयोऽसद्भिर्नामजात्यादिभिर्विभुः ॥
न योगवान्न युक्तोऽभून्नैव पार्थिव चोक्ष्यते ॥ ३० ॥

The soul is free of birth, one, omnipresent, pure, homogenous, formless and beyond nature. It is free of birth and ageing, and is omnipresent and indestructible. (28)

Oh Rajan! He is the knower of everything, he is neither known nor will ever be known by manmade names or categories. (30)

The translation of the word Vishnu in the Vishnu Purana is done in the 'omnipresent' sense only-

यसमाद्विष्टमिदं विश्वं तस्य शक्त्या महात्मनः ।
तसमात्स प्रोच्यते विष्णुर्विशोर्धातोः प्रवेशनात् ॥ ४५ ॥
- वि. पु. अंश. ३, अ. १

This entire universe is full of the energy of that almighty. Therefore, he is known as the Vishnu because the root word 'Vish' means to enter.

न हयामध्यांतमजस्य यस्य विद्यो वयं सर्वमयस्यधातुः ।
न च स्वरूपं न परं स्वभावं न चैव सारं परमेश्वरस्य ॥ ८३ ॥
कलामुहूर्त्तादिमयश्च कालो न यद्विभूतेः परिणामहेतुः ।
अजन्मानाश्वस्य सदैकमूर्तेरनाम रूपस्य सनातनस्य ॥ ८४ ॥
- वि. पु. अंश. ४, अ. १

We don't find the beginning, mid or end of the summary of the immortal, omnipresent, god, almighty; we don't know his form or kind. (86). Time, occasion or art cannot be the reason for whose experience, whose birth and death does not take place, who is constant always and is free of name and form. (84)

The almighty cannot be seen with these eyes; can be seen only through self-study and yoga. The following shloka beautifully throws light on this topic and propagates that “idol worship is the path to god” -

स्वाध्याययोगमसीत योगात्स्वाध्यायमामनेत ।
स्वाध्याययोगसम्पत्त्या परमात्मा प्रकाशते ॥ २ ॥
तदी क्षणायस्वाध्यायश्चक्षुर्योगस्थापरः ।
न मांसचक्षुषा द्रष्टुं ब्रह्माभूतः स्शाक्यते ॥ ३ ॥
- वि . पु . अ . ६ . अ . ६

Protect yoga through self-study and vice versa. This is how the god can be illuminated using possessions called self-study and yoga. The almighty, who is a form of brahma cannot be seen with eyes full of desire for flesh. Self-study and yoga are the only two eyes to see it.

न त्रात्मा स्वयंज्योतिर्यो व्यक्ता व्यक्तया परः ।
आकाश इव चाधारो ध्रुवोऽनन्तोपमस्ततः ॥ ८ ॥

The radiant almighty is subtler than the elements that can be defined. It is the base of all like the sky, free of faults, endless and beyond comparison.

अपाणिपाद जावनों गृहीता हृदिसंस्थितः ।
अचक्षुरपि पश्यामि तथाकर्णः क्षृणोम्यहम् ॥
- कूर्म उपरिभाग, अ. २ , पृष्ठ ४५९

I am the one who resides in the heart. I do the task of taking without hands and walking without feet. I can see without the eyes and hear without the ears.

प्रधानपुरुषातीतं प्रलयोत्पत्तिवर्जितम् ।
- लिंग. पु. अ. २

The almighty is above nature and life, and it is free of birth and death.

आधिव्याधि जरामृत्यु शोकभीति विवर्जितम् ।

- ब्र. वै. पु. ब्र. खं. अ. २

The god is completely free of sorrow, disease, old-age, death, grief and fear.

गन्ध-वर्ण-रसैहीनं शब्दस्पर्श-विवर्जितम् ।

अजातं ध्रुवमक्षय्यं नित्यं स्वात्मन्यवस्थितम् ॥ १८ ॥

The almighty is free of smell, color, taste, words, and touch; it is not born, constant, immortal and is present in one's soul.

अचक्षुरपि यः पश्यत्यकर्णोऽपि क्षणोति ।

सर्वं वेत्ति न वेत्तास्य तमाहुः पुरुषं परम् ॥ ८७ ॥

- शिव. पु. वायु सं. अ . ४

He sees without the use of eyes and he hears without ears. He knows everyone, there is no one who knows him completely. He is known as the greatest man, the divine.

सर्वं तत्र सर्वत्र व्याप्य तिष्ठति शाश्वतः ।

तथापि कापि केनापि व्यक्तमेष न दृश्यते ॥ ४३ ॥

नैवायं चक्षुषा ग्राहो नापरैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

मनसैव प्रदीप्तेन महानात्मावसीयते ॥ ४७ ॥

तिलेषु वा यथा तैलं दधिर्नर्वा सर्पिरर्पितम् ।

यथापः स्त्रोतसि व्याप्तो यथारण्यां हुताशनः ॥ ७४ ॥

एवमेव महात्मानमात्मन्यात्म विलक्षणम् ।

सत्येन तपसा चैव नित्ययुक्तोऽपश्यती ॥ ७५ ॥

He is present everywhere and resides inside everyone, even then cannot be seen in any visible form anywhere. (46). He can neither be seen with the eyes, nor be realized through any other senses. Only enlightened mind can perceive the greatest. (47). Just like oil is hidden in sesame and butter is hidden in curd, just

like water is hidden in the reservoir and fire is hidden in the wood. (74). Similarly, the almighty is hidden in the soul and has no symptoms. A yogi can see him constantly in his soul through truth and perseverance. (75)

All the Puranas describe the worship of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiv and Shakti primarily. But the Purana of every community declares the god that is worshipped amongst them the supreme-most and condemns the god worshipped by the other communities. The Vaishnava Puranas prove that Vishnu is great and remaining Brahma, Shiv and Shakti are inferior and that their worshippers are headed towards hell. Similarly, the Shiva Purana praises Shiva and condemns the rest of the gods. ‘Devi Bhagwat’, a Purana of the Shaktas(worshippers of Shakti) has criticized Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in very harsh words. One community openly and freely uses abusive words for the followers of another religion. Not just that, these Puranas have descriptions of mutual wars and victory-defeat of these gods. We will show some of it to the readers in the sections to come.

This mutual competition between communities during the Purana era totally proves that no matter what the ancient reason behind idol worship was, but over time it expanded as a result of commercial thinking and even today this feeling is standing in the way of abandoning it, in spite of knowing its futility and shortcomings. The conditions of these communities is exactly similar to how one shopkeeper calls his items the best and those of others inferior, in order to attract customers to his shop. These people want to establish their business by praising their god and ‘Tilak’ and condemning that of others. Otherwise, if there existed the feeling of one god among all the gods worshipped, then there was no reason for this competition. This is a natural consequence of polytheism. This commercial, communal competition in the Purana era was the major cause for the internal unrest among the Arya race. We will show over here that very mentality in brief.

The Padma Purana, while praising Vishnu and the incarnations of Vishnu, writes that –

राघवः सर्वदेवानां पालकः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ ११५ ॥

स्पष्टा दृष्टाश्च तेनैव विमलाः शंकरादयः ॥ ११३ ॥

- पद्य. पु. उत्त. खं. अ. २२५

The greatest of all, Lord Rama is the purest among all god. All the gods became

purified due to his touch and sight.

कस्तेन तुल्यतामेति देवदेवेन विष्णुना ।

यस्यांशांशावतारेण विना सर्वं विलीयते ।

- प. पु. पाताल खं. अ. ९७

Who can parallel Vishnu, the god of gods? Everything dissolves without the smallest share of his incarnation.

यस्तु नारायणं देवं ब्रह्मा रुद्रादि देवतेः ।

समत्वेनैव वीक्षेत् स पाषण्डी भवेत्सदा ॥ ९ ॥

- प. पु. उत्तर. खं. अ. २६३

The one considers Vishnu to be equal to Brahma, Shiva and other gods, is perpetually hypocritical.

किमत्रा बहुनोक्तेन ब्राह्मणः येप्यवैष्णवाः ।

न स्पृष्टव्या न वक्तव्या न दृष्टव्या कदाचन ॥ ११ ॥

- प. पु. उ. खं. अ. २६३

What more can be said, just that it is a sin to touch, talk to or see someone who believes in a god other than Vishnu.

अनर्च्या ब्रह्मारुद्रा रजस्तमोविमिश्रिताः ।

त्वं शुद्धसत्त्वगुणवान् पूजनीयोजन्मनाम् ॥ ६० ॥

Brahma and Shiva possess the qualities of luxuriousness and that of darkness, therefore they are not worthy of being worshipped. Oh Vishnu! You are the one who possesses good qualities, therefore you are worthy of being worshipped by the Brahmins.

इतरेषां तू देवानामन्नं पुष्पं जलं तथा ।

अस्पृश्यन्तु भवेत्सर्वं निर्माल्यं सुरया समम् ॥ ६३ ॥

The food-grains, flowers and water of other gods is not worthy of even being touched, in fact all the offering is similar to alcohol.

This same Purana has the following shlokas in which Lord Shiva has criticized himself –

देवतानां हितार्थाय वृत्तिः पाषण्डिनां शुभे ।
कपालचर्मभस्मास्थि धारणं तत्कृतं मया ॥ ५३ ॥
ये मे मतमाश्रित्य चरन्ति पृथ्वीतले ।
सर्वधर्मेभ्यश्च रहिताः पश्यन्ति निरयं सदा ॥ ६० ॥

Lord Shiva says- Oh pious Parvati! I bore with hypocrites who possess bone, skull and ask for the sake of the betterment of the gods. Those who adopt my opinion and behave on the earth, they will become tainted of all religions and see the face of hell.

पुरा गद्योगीन्द्र विष्णुर्विषधरासनः ।
 सुष्वाप परया भूत्या स्वानुगैरपि सुवृतः ॥ १ ॥
 यदृच्छयागतस्तत्र ब्रह्मा ब्रह्माविदांवरः ।
 अपृच्छत् पुण्डरीकाक्षं श्यानं सर्वसुन्दरम् ॥ २ ॥
 कस्त्वं पुरुष वल्लेखे दृष्टवानपि दृष्टवत् ।
 उत्तिष्ठ वत्स मां पश्य तव नाथमिहागतम् ॥ ३ ॥
 आगतं गुरुमाराध्यं दृष्ट्वा यो दृष्टवच्चरेत् ।
 द्रोहिणस्तस्य मूढस्य प्रायश्चित्तं विधीयते ॥ ४ ॥
 इतिश्रुत्वा वचः कृद्धो बहिः शांतवदाचन् ।
 स्वस्ति ते स्वागतं वत्स तिष्ठ पीठमितो विश ॥ ५ ॥

ब्रह्मोवाच -

कीमुते व्यग्रवद्वक्तं विभाति विषमेणम् ।
 वत्सविष्णो महामागतं कालवेगतः ॥ ६ ॥

विष्णुरुवाच -

पितामहश्च जगतः पाता छ वत्सक ।
 मत्स्थं जगदिदं वत्स मन्ये त्वं हि चोरवत् ॥ ७ ॥

नन्दिकेश्वर उवाच -

अहमेव वरो न त्वमहं प्रभुरहं प्रभुः ।
 परस्परं हंतुकामौ चक्रतुः समरोदयमम् ॥ ९ ॥

- शिवपुराण, विद्ये. ख. १ अ . ६

Oh Yogendra! Once upon a time Lord Vishnu used to rest on the bed of the snake god with Lakshmi. (1) That time Brahma, the greatest among all the scholars, came there with his own will and began asking Vishnu who has beautiful eyes and who was resting on a beautiful bed. (2) Who are you that rests like a proud human in spite of seeing me? Oh child! Get up, look I, you master, has come. (3). The deceitful and foolish who acts haughty on seeing their teacher should repent (4). Hearing this, Vishnu got angry on the inside but he remained calm on the outside and said, Oh! May you prosper, come sit on this seat (5). Your eyes appear cynical and your face bewildered right now. Brahma says Oh Vishnu! You are proud because of the effect of time (6). Oh Son! I am your protector and the father of the world. Vishnu says, all of this world resides inside

me. How can you call it yours like a thief? (7). I am the greatest, I am the master – this is what they kept saying and agreed to fight a battle with the intention of killing each other (9).

Praising one's own community, praising Brahma's signs and criticizing the symbols of other communities were major parts of this communal struggle. A sample of praise for the symbols of Vaishnava community like the shell, the wheel etc. and criticism for using the ash in the Shaiva community is given below-

न तस्य किञ्चिदशनीयादपि क्रतु सहस्त्रिणः ।
सर्ववेदविदो वापि सर्वशास्त्रविशारदः ॥ ४२ ॥
अधृत्वा विधिना चक्रं ब्राह्मण पतितो भवेत् ।
ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्रविहीनस्तु शङ्खचक्रविवर्जितः ॥ ४३ ॥
तं गर्दभे समारोप्य बहिः कुर्यात् स्वपत्न्याम् ॥ ४४ ॥
पद्य . पु . ऊ . अ . २५३

One who performs a thousand yajnas, one who is the knower of all the Vedas and scriptures, and the one who does not believe in the shell or the wheel, declines if he is a Brahmin. Such people should be made to sit on top of donkeys and driven out of the city. Read further-

यच्छरीरं मनुष्याण मूर्ध्वपुण्ड्रविवर्जितम् ।
द्रिष्ट्यं नैव तत् किञ्चित् शमशानस्दृशं भवेत् ॥ १२ ॥
ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्रविहीनस्तु संध्याकर्मादिकं चरेत् ।
तत् सर्वं राक्षसैनीतं नरकं चाधिगच्छति ॥ १४ ॥
यच्छरीरं मनुष्याण मूर्ध्वपुण्ड्रविवर्जितम् ।
द्रिष्ट्यं नैव तत् किञ्चित् शमशानस्दृशं भवेत् ॥ १२ ॥
ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्रविहीनस्तु संध्याकर्मादिकं चरेत् ।
तत् सर्वं राक्षसैनीतं नरकं चाधिगच्छति ॥ १४ ॥

The man who does not have the tilak on his forehead, he should never be seen. That forehead looks similar to a crematorium (12). The man who performs

prayers without the tilak heads towards hell.

ब्राह्मणः कलजो विद्वान् भस्मधारी भवेद्यदि ।
वर्ज्यतादृशं देव मद्योच्छिष्टं घटं यथा ॥ १९ ॥

If a true Brahmin applies ash on his forehead, then do not meet him just like a pot full of alcohol should not be.

Shaiva scriptures like the Shiva Purana are full of praise for Shiva, but strongly criticize the worshipping of Brahma, Vishnu and Shakti as well as symbols used for them. The Shiva Purana considers Shiva as the only creator, other gods are petty creatures according to it-

शिवैको ब्रह्मा रूपत्वान्निष्कलः परिकीर्तितः ॥ १० ॥
निष्कलत्वान्निकारारं लिंगं तस्य समागतम् ॥ ११ ॥
अब्रह्मात्तादृशेषां निष्कलत्वं नहि क्वचित् ॥ १३ ॥
ब्रह्मात्तादृशं जीवत्वात्तथानये देवतागणाः ॥ १४ ॥
जीवत्वं शंकरान्येषां ब्रह्मत्वं शंकरस्य च ॥ १५ ॥
शिवान्येषां जीवत्वात् सकलत्वात्तच्च सर्वतः ॥ २२ ॥
- शि. पु . विद्ये. स. अ. ५

Shiva is the only form of the creator and is known as unproductive (10). This is why his symbols and form are incorporeal (11). No god other than Shiva is the creator, thus they cannot be unproductive (13). Other gods are creatures, not gods (14). Gods other than Shiva possess life and Shiva possesses divinity (14). Gods other than Shiva are void of all forms of art because they are forms of life (22)

शिवसामान्य वक्तारं शिवसामान्य दाशिनम् ।
दृष्ट्वा स्नायात् सचैलं सन् शिव सामान्यसङ्गिन् ॥ ७५ ॥

Whenever one sees someone who calls other gods as similar to Shiva or considers them equals, then he should bathe while dressed up.

महेशस्येव दासोऽयं विष्णुस्तेनानुकम्पितः ॥ ५ ॥

This poor Vishnu is a servant of Lord Shiva.

इन्द्रोपेन्द्रादयः सर्वे महेशस्यैवकिङ्कराः ॥ ६ ॥

Indra and other gods are servants of Lord Shiva.

तेन तुल्यो यदा विष्णुब्रह्मा वा यदि गद्यते ।
षष्टिवर्ष सहस्राणी विष्ठायां जायते कृमिः ॥ १७ ॥
- लिंग पु . उत्तरभाग, अ. ११

The man who calls Vishnu, Brahma etc. equal to Shiva will take birth in the form of worm of the soil for 60 thousand years.

शिवलिंगं समुत्सृज्य यजन्ते चान्यदेवता ।
स नृपः सह देशेन रौरवं नरकं व्रजेत् ॥ ३५ ॥
शिवभक्तो न यो राजा भक्तोऽन्येषु सुरेषु च ।
स्वपतिं युवतिस्त्यक्त्वा यथा जारेषु राजते ॥ ३६ ॥
- लिंग पु . उत्तरभाग, अ. ११

The king who worships other gods and abandons the Shiva Linga, heads towards a terrible hell with his kingdom. The king who is not devoted to Shiva but is devoted to another god, is similar to the woman who leaves her husband and enjoys with another man.

The Shaiva scriptures have descriptions, of Shiva defeating Vishnu and Brahma in war, at many places. Bhairava cut the fifth head of Brahma on Shiva's instructions. Also the plight of Narshima, an incarnation of Vishnu, at the hands of Shiva is described in the following words of the Puranas-

Nandikeshwara says-

सस्जार्थं महादेवः पुरुषं कंचिदद्भुतम् ।
भैरवाख्यं भ्रुवो मध्याद् ब्रह्मादर्पं जिघांसया ॥ १ ॥
स वै तदा तत्र पतिं प्रण्यभ्य शिवमांगणे ।
किं कार्यं करवाण्यत्र शीघ्रमाज्ञापय प्रभो ॥ २ ॥
वत्स योऽयं विधिः साक्षाज्जगतामाद्यदैवतम् ।
नूनमर्चय खड्गेन तिग्मेन जवसा परम् ॥ ३ ॥
स वै ग्रहीत्वैककरेण केशं तत्पंचमं दृप्तमसत्यभाषिणम् ।
छित्वा शिरो हास्य निहन्तुमुद्यतः प्रकम्पयन् खड्गं मति स्फुटं
करैः ॥ ४ ॥
पिता तवोत्सृष्ट विभूषणांबरस्त्रगुत्तरीयामलकेशसंहितः ।
प्रवालंभेव लतेव चंचलः पपात वै भैरवपादपंकजे ॥ ५ ॥

Nandikeshwar says that Lord Shiva gave birth to an amazing person called Bhairava, from the middle of his eyebrows, in order to behead Brahma (1). As soon as he was born, he bowed to Shiva in the battle field and said Oh God! What should I do? Please guide me (2). Shiva said Oh Child! This is Brahma, the ancient god of the universe. Worship him with a sharp, penetrating, swift knife, meaning attack him (3). Upon hearing this, Bhairava held his hair with one hand while cutting the fifth liar head of Brahma and wanting to cut the rest of them too (4). That is when your father Lord Brahma fell in the feet of Bhairava, quickly and trembling like a climber while abandoning his ornaments, garlands, and clothes (5).

सहस्रबाहुर्जटिलश्चंद्राढकृत शंकरः ।
 समृद्धोऽग्रशरीरेण पक्ष्भ्यां चञ्चुना द्विजः ॥ ८ ॥
 आतितीक्ष्णो महादंष्ट्रो वज्रतुल्यनखायुधः ।
 कण्ठे कालो महाबाहुश्चतुष्पाद् वहिन्नसन्निभः ॥ ९ ॥
 हरिस्तद्दर्शनादेव विनष्टबलविक्रमः ।
 विभ्रद्धाम सहस्रांशोरधः खाद्योतविभ्रमम् ॥ १२ ॥
 अथ विभ्रम्य पक्षाभ्यां नाभिपादान् विदारयन् ।
 पादान्बबन्धे पुच्छेन बाहुभ्यां बाहुमण्डलम् ॥ १३ ॥
 भिन्दन्नुरसि बाहुभयान्निजग्राह हरो हरिम् ।
 ततो जगाम गगनं देवैस्सह महर्षिभिः ॥ १४ ॥
 उड्डीयोड्डीय भगवान् पक्षघात् विमोहितम् ।
 हरि हरस्तं वृषभं विवेशानन्त ईश्वरः ॥ १६ ॥

With a thousand arms, long hair, half-moon on the forehead, having a fierce body and glorious with feathers and beak (8). With extremely penetrating molars, with weapons of nails that are like thunderbolt, the time in his throat, big arms, four limbs and appearance like fire, Shiva appeared in front of Narsimha (9). Narsimha's strength and bravery destroyed with his sight itself, just like glowworms lose their light in front of the sun (12). Then he turned his wings, rupturing the limbs and tied tail with the legs and both hands with the hands of Narsimha (13). Shiva, while penetrating his heart with his hands, took on Vishnu as Narsimha and went towards the sky while the saints and sages watched (14). Shiva confused Vishnu with his wings while he was flying, then Vishnu hid under a bull (16).

This community too, is not behind others in terms of praising the symbols of Shiva and criticizing those of others. According to them, people who don't wear ash, Tripundra or Rudraksh are sinners –

उद्धलं त्रिपुण्ड्रं च श्रद्धया नाचरन्ति ये ।
तेषां नास्ति समाचारो वर्णाश्रमसमन्वितः ॥ १३ ॥
ते महापातकैर्युक्ता इतिशास्त्रीय निर्णयः ॥ १६ ॥
- - दे. भा. स्कं. ५ अ . १

Those who do not wear the ask and tripundra with devotion, their behavior is not in accordance with the societal rules (13). They are great sinners – this is a decision of the scriptures (16).

नाशनीयाज्जलमन्नमल्पमपि व भस्माक्षधृतया विना ।
भुक्त्वा वाथ ग्रही वनी यतिमती वर्णी तथा संकरः ।
एनोभुङ् नरकं प्रयाति ॥ ४३ ॥
धिग्भस्मरहितं भालं धिग्ग्रामं शिवालयम् ।
धिग्नीशार्चनं जन्म धिग्विद्यामशिवाश्रयाम् ॥ ४५ ॥
ते वै संकर सूकरासुरखरश्वकोष्ट कीटोपमाः ।
जाता एवं भवन्ति पापपरमास्ते नारकाः केवलम् ॥ ४७ ॥
- दे. भा. ५ - ९

Don't eat or drink anything from those who do not wear ask or rudraksh. Anyone who has food from their place is a sinner and goes to hell, be it a householder, ascetic, forest dweller, or a hybrid (43). A forehead without ash, a village without a Shiva temple, a life without devotion for god, and knowledge without the blessings of Shiva are condemnable (45). One who disrespects Shiva, who is the base of all the three worlds, and also disrespects the devotees of Shiva, is wrong in his beliefs. He is definitely equivalent to a cross bred, pig, demon, fool, donkey, jackal and insect. They have taken birth as a result of sin. They have taken birth only to go to hell later.

‘Devi Bhagwat’ is the only purana of the Shaktas. It has left no stone unturned in criticizing Vishnu and his incarnations like Rama and Krishna. Everyone has been shown as inferior. Incarnations have been called a result of past misdeeds and curses. Criticisms of Shiva and brahma find place at more than one places.

The Devi Bhagwat tells a story that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva all went to meet the Goddess. The goddess converted all three into women. Brahma says Oh

Narada! Listen to what I saw there –

2nd Feb

शृणु नारद स वक्ष्यामि यदृष्टं तत्रचाभ्युदितम् ।
नखदर्पणमध्ये वै देव्याश्चरणपंकजे ॥ १४ ॥
ब्रह्माण्डमखिलं सर्वं तत्र स्थावरजंगमम् ।
अहं विष्णुश्च रुद्रश्च वायुरग्निर्यमो रविः ॥ १५ ॥
वरुणः शीतगुस्त्वष्टा कुबेरः पाकशासनः ।
पर्वताः सागराः नद्यो गंधर्वाप्सरस्तथा ॥ १६ ॥
वैकुण्ठो ब्रह्मा लोकश्च कैलासः पर्वतोत्तमः ।
सर्वं तदखिलं दृष्टं नखमध्यस्थितं च नः ॥ १९ ॥
मञ्जन्म पंकजं तत्र स्थितोऽहं चतुराननः ।
शेषशाही जगन्नाथस्तथा च मधुकैटभौ ॥ २० ॥
विष्णुश्च विस्मयाविष्टः शंकरश्च तथा स्थितः ।
तां तदा मेनिरे देवीं वयं विश्वस्य मातरम् ॥ २२ ॥
- दे. भा. स्कं न अ . ४ (वे डेटेश्वर प्रेस, बम्बई)

We saw in the middle of the nail of the goddess's feet everything movable, and immovable in the universe, Vishnu, Brahma, air, fire, Yama, sun, moon, Varuna, Kubera, mountains, seas, rivers, angels, paradise, Kailasa the greatest among mountains. (14, 15, 16, 19). We saw our birth from the center of the lotus and found ourselves on the lotus. We saw Madhukaitabha the demon and Lord Jagannath (20). Vishnu and Shiva were also amazed and surprised. That is when we recognized the mother of the universe (22).

Thereafter there is a detailed description of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva worshipping the goddess with extreme humility and poverty. Details are not being given here for the fear of elongation.

Devi Bhagwat has made an attempt to badly insult Vishnu by calling his various incarnations the curse of sage Bhrigu. Vishnu beheaded the wife of Bhrigu with his Sudarshana Chakra on Indra's instructions. Saddened by her death, Bhrigu cursed him which is as follows-

अकृतं ते कृतं विष्णु जानन् पापं महामते ।
 वधोऽयं विप्रजाताया मनसा कर्तुमक्षमः ॥ २ ॥
 तामसस्त्वं कथं जातः कृतं कर्मा तिनिन्दितम् ।
 अवध्या स्त्री त्वया विष्णो हता कस्मान्निरागसा ॥ ४ ॥
 शपामि त्वां दुराचारं किमन्यठाकरोमि ते ।
 विधुरोऽहं कृतः पाप त्वयाऽयं शक्रकारयात् ॥ ५ ॥
 न शपेऽहं तथा शक्रं शपे त्वां मधुसूदन ।
 सदा छलपरोऽसि त्वं कीटयोनिदुराशयः ॥ ६ ॥
 शृणु नारद स वक्ष्यामि यद्दृष्टं तत्रचाद्भुतम् ।
 ये च त्वां सात्त्विकं प्राहुस्ते मूखां मुनयः किल ।
 तामसस्त्वं दुराचारः प्रत्यक्षं मे जनार्दन ॥ ७ ॥
 अवतारा मृत्युलोके सन्तु मच्छापसंभवाः ।
 प्रायो गर्भं भवं दुःखं भुङ्क्व पापाज्जनार्दन ॥ ८ ॥
 - दे. भा. स्कं. ४ अ . १२

Oh Madhusudan! You did such a thing intentionally in spite of being so intelligent. Murdering this wise girl is something that should not even be thought of, and you did that actually (2). Oh Vishnu! Why did you become ignorant and did such a condemnable offence? A female is sacred and not supposed to be killed. Why did you kill this distressed woman without any fault of hers? (4). This behavior of yours is extremely condemnable. What should I do with you now? It is fair to curse you. Oh sinner! You made me a widower because of Indra (5). I will not curse Indra, but rather curse you instead. You always behave deceitfully like a snake. You are wicked (6). Sages who call you full of good virtues are extremely foolish. You are evil and misbehaving, I learnt this today in front of me (6). As a result of my curse, you will take birth multiple times after death and bear the fruits of your deeds as you suffer in the womb (8).

It is written further in the same purana that-

शप्तो हरिस्तु भृगुणा कुपितेन कामं मीनो बभूव कमठः खलु
सूकरस्तू ।

पश्चान्नुसिंह इति यच्छलकृद्धरायां तानसेवतां जननी

मृत्युभयं न किं स्यात् ॥ १८ ॥

- दे. भा. स्कं. ५ अ . १६

Oh mother! Vishnu came to the earth incarnated as a fish, tortoise, half man-half lion, boar etc. because of a curse of Sage Bhrigu. This is his defeat only. Why would those who worship these defeated incarnations not be scared of death?

किं चित्रं नृप देवी सा ब्रह्मा विष्णु सूरानपि ।

नर्तयत्यनिशं माया त्रिगुणानपरान् किम् ॥ ४ ॥

गर्भवासोद् भवं दुःखं विष्णुमूत्रस्नायुसंयुतम् ।

विष्णोरापादितं सम्बग् यया विगतलीलया ॥ ५ ॥

पुरा रामावतारेऽपि निर्जरा वानराः कृताः ।

विदितं ते तथा विष्णुः दुःखपाशेन् मोहितः ॥ ६ ॥

- दे. भा. स्कं. ४ अ . २०

Oh protector! The goddess, having three qualities and miracles, keeps troubling the gods of Brahma, Vishnu etc. What is there to be surprised if she tries to attract someone else? Oh King! The qualities of that Mahamaya(Durga) is proven. What more? She made Vishnu stay inside a womb full of bodily fluids and experience pain (5). Previously, when he incarnated as Rama, she converted the gods to apes. Oh King! You are very well aware of the pain experienced by Vishnu while trapped in the snares of this illusory world (6).

Thus, this purana has listed the imperfections of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Indra, Rama, Krishna, Parshurama, Buddha etc. all the gods and their incarnations one by one. We do not present all the citations here for the fear of elongation.

Even the Shaktas apply ash on their foreheads, therefore those who do not wear the ash have been called a pariah in every birth.

न यस्य सहजा प्रीतिमर्णिवद् भस्मसंग्रहे ।
स चांडाल इति ज्ञेयः जन्मजन्मान्तरे ध्रुवम् ॥

- दे. भा. १९ । १५ । १५

Brahma-

Brahma has not been given any special importance in the puranas. There is neither a separate community nor a purana in his name like those of Vaishnavas, Shaivas and Shaktas. Leaving aside a few exceptions, there is no trend of worshipping Brahma's idol in this country. Pushkar is the only place of pilgrimage with a temple of Brahma. There is a story in the Padma Purana regarding expelling Brahma of this system. Brahma performed a yajna at Pushkar. His wife, Savitri, got late in reaching this yajna. That is when Indra called a cow herder girl and got the married forcefully. He made her sit in the prayer and began the rituals. Just then Savitri also arrived. She criticized Brahma for this to which she replied that 'There was no fault of mine in this. It was getting late for the yajna, so Indra got this girl and Lord Vishnu also approved it, thus I agreed. Please forgive my crime.' Then Savitri cursed him that thereafter he will not be worshipped on any day except for the Kartik Purnima (the full moon day in the Hindu month of Kartika) –

नैव ते ब्राह्मणाः पूजां करिष्यन्ति कदाचन ।

ऋते कार्तिकीमेकां पूजां सांवत्सरीं तव ॥

Similarly, another story in Shiv purana Vidyeshwari volume chapter 6 prohibits the worship of Brahma. The story goes like this. Once upon a time Brahma and Vishnu struck a debate regarding their own importance which led to a fierce battle between them. Gods went to Shiva in order to pacify the war. Shiva came and constructed a pillar between both of them which extended from heaven to hell. He then told both of them that whoever could go and see the end of the pillar will be considered great among gods in the world. Thereafter both of them kept searching for the end for hundreds of years but could not find. Vishnu returned and confessed the truth that he could not find, but Brahma lied that he had found the end. Shiva became happy and said Vishnu was truthful, therefore his idol will be worshipped in the world –

इतः परं ते प्रिथगात्मञ्च क्षेत्रप्रतिष्ठोत्सवपूजनं च ।

And he told Brahma that – you told a lie, therefore you shall not be worshipped –

नातस्ते सत्कृतिर्लोके भूयात्स्थानोत्सवादिकम् ।

Brahmavaivary purana, Krishna's birth chapter 32 has a story which also proves that Brahma is not to be worshipped. It is written there that Vishnu's beloved Mohini became salacious and went to Brahma once. Brahma did not appreciate this as she was the beloved of Vishnu. That is when Mohini cursed Brahma that he will never be worshipped by the world. Brahma went to Vishnu and narrated the entire incident and said that you shall not be worshipped alone, but along with other gods-

यदन्यदेवपूजायां तव पूजा भविष्यति ।

The stories mentioned above are strange, all of which somehow blame Brahma in different ways and prohibit worshipping him. Otherwise there are a lot more stories tarnishing the images of Vishnu and Shiva in the puranas compared to Brahma. Then why was Brahma only targeted? We opine that the non-Brahmins who were mainly responsible for publicizing idol worship, wanted to insult Brahma, a symbol of Brahmins. Therefore, they made these stories and called him not worthy of worship.

We have proved earlier that idol worship came into existence during the Buddhism era and the idol of Buddha was the first to be worshipped in this country. Lord Buddha was a Kshatriya himself and his preaching's were mainly among the Brahmins and upper castes naturally. After the decline of Buddhism, the idols of Buddha were replaced by those of Vishnu and Shiva, imitating the Buddhas. These two imaginary gods are not representatives of Kshatriyas and not the Brahmins. Kshatriya caste is represented by destruction and the capability to take care. Worshipping of Shakti by the Shaktas is mainly based on the Kshatriya caste as well.

Rama and Krishna, popular incarnations of Vishnu who are worshipped throughout the country and are considered complete incarnations, belonged to the Kshatriya community. Parshurama is the only Brahmin among all the incarnations, and is worshipped nowhere. Therefore, it is no surprise that an attempt to outcast Brahma was made in the puranas as he was a symbol of righteousness, knower of the Vedas, and performer of yajnas.

Brahma is the first ancient perpetrator of Vedic knowledge. He holds a main position among the four sacrificial priests of the yajna rituals. But among the Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Shaktas communities, their respective puranas are given importance over Vedas, their respective gods, idols and temples have been given importance over yajnas. Shaktas do perform yajnas, but there are rituals for offering flesh and alcohol and sacrificing animals, which are clearly against the Vedas.

There are stories in the puranas, where Shiva destroyed yajnas. Padmapurana, Srishti part, Chapter 17 has a story which goes like Brahma was performing a yajna once upon a time. Shiva went to the place for asking for alms while wearing the 'panchsootra' and carrying the big skull; he sat very near the priest. Seeing this, the Brahmins who study Vedas said that how come you came here in such a condemnable attire? Several attempts were made to drive him away, but he did not go. Finally, he was fed and satisfied. That is when he finally left saying that he is going to Pushkar for a bath; but left his bonehead in the premises which was later thrown away by the brahmins. When one bonehead was thrown out, another began to be visible in the same place. Similarly, every time a skull was thrown out a new one replaced it and this continued to happen and did not stop even till a thousand of them were thrown away. The brahmins were forced to go to Pushkar with Brahma and that bonehead could be removed from there only after a big prayer organized for Shiva. After some time had passed, Shiva again came to a yajna of Brahma. This time again he came naked holding his bonehead. People criticized him and pulled him out and then scolded him that his entry in such an attire in front of ladies is condemnable. This angered Shiva and he showered the Brahmins with many curses.

An alternative story regarding Shiva destroying his father-in-law King Daksha's yajna in this Padma Purana's chapter 5 of the Srishti division. Daksha did not invite Shiva to his yajna. The reason he gave Parvati for this clearly throws light on the demonic, bonehead nature. Daksha said- your husband always carries a bowl made of skull in his hands. He covers himself with hide, applies ash from the funeral pyre and stays naked. He resides in the cremation ground and wears tiger skin. He also wraps himself in elephant skin from which even drops of blood keep dripping. He wears a necklace of skulls of dead humans around his neck. These are the many reasons because of which I feel ashamed and hesitant to invite him with other gods and make him sit alongside them.

Seeing Shiva being insulted like this, his famous disciple Veerbhadra along with

others destroyed this yajna. They set the yajna venue on fire, killed the gods, fought a fierce battle with Vishnu. Vishnu was defeated at the end and he was beheaded while his head was thrown into the fire. The sages and ascetics began running here and there. Veerbhadra plucked the nostrils of 'Saraswati' and 'Vedmata' with his sharp nails, and he beheaded Prajati and threw his head in the fire, etc. This story clearly shows the criticizing and opposing nature of the Shaiva community.

The two stories mentioned above are enough to validate our belief that the Shaivas were opponents of Vedic yajnas and used to destroy yajnas just like the demons of the Ramayana era. Their popular Shiv-linga worship, which we will discuss further later in this chapter, is a representation of worshipping the male and female genitals by the leftists. Bhairava of the people who worship Durga is also close to Shiva and this is how this community is closely related to the leftist Shaktas.

Although the Vaishnavas strongly oppose consumption of meat and alcohol but this community replaced yajna with idol worship. As we have written earlier, the belief in incarnations and idol worship was encouraged by the Vaishnavas only. Calling Bhagwat the 'Pancham Veda', Ved Vyas's dissatisfaction with Vedas and imagination of god, calling sacrifice, perseverance, meditation useless in the modern era, calling worshipping Rama-Krishna for namesake as the easy path to salvation, all these activities can only be called attempts to deviate from the path shown by Vedas.

The lewd tendency of this community of having relations with an unrelated woman also brings it closer to leftism. This tendency can be easily proved by various stories of this community like Lord Vishnu destroying the faithfulness of Vrinda, a loyal lady of Jalandhar, Krishna incarnation having intercourse with a hunchbacked servant, illegitimate affair and intimate relationship with a cow herder Radha, etc. other stories which need not be mentioned specially. Relations with another woman are openly encouraged by giving Radha a place while worshipping Krishna in spite of the presence of his wives. As a result, any kind of obscenity where Krishna had these affairs is no longer considered obscene. The householder people in the south marry their daughters to idols of Vishnu and leave them to sing and recite in the temples, there are instances of sages of this community misbehaving with their female disciples. These are examples which are clearly imitations of the evil deeds like affairs with unrelated women in leftism.

The Lord Jagganath temple in Puri is a live example of this leftist tendency. The obscene pictures sculptured on the walls of the temple, all the Vaishnavas sitting in a queue and together having sweet rice from used leaf-plates without any discrimination are both adaptations of leftism. Therefore, even the Vaishnava community is not uninfluenced by leftism. In such a situation it is not unnatural of Brahma, the perpetrator of Vedas and yajnas, to be outcast by these communities.

The Vedas and other religious scriptures lay special emphasis on Dev-yajna among the five daily yajnas. It is also called worshipping the god because it is intended to purification or worship of the five inanimate elemental gods. This was interpreted by these communities as worshipping Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva etc. imaginary gods. Slowly idol worship of these gods replaced the true meaning of the word. It was important to reduce the importance of yajnas to promote idol worship. The yajnas which were prevalent during the Mahabharata and Ramayana times were replaced by various kinds of idol worship, pilgrimage etc. Once upon a time great Ashwamedh yajnas took place whereas they were now replaced by lighting incense sticks and lamps in front of idols.

Shiv-Linga Worship

Shiv-linga holds an important position among the idols worshipped in our country. The idols of other gods and incarnations resemble their body, but like the name suggests Shiv-linga is of the shape of the phallus of Shiva. Worshipping phallus is an activity of the leftists as we have written earlier. Therefore this Shiv-linga worship is also a representative of that only.

It would have been right if the thoughtful scholars raised their voices against this indecent and obscene form of idol worship and attempts would have been made to stop its propagation; but contrary to this the new definition of the word 'Shiv-linga' is given to make an inappropriate attempt at hiding the truth which is contradictory to the numerous evidences given in the Puranas. These modern translators say that 'Linga' does not mean phallus, instead means symbol, thus Shiv-linga means a symbol of Shiva. 'Linga' definitely means symbol, there can be no two ways about it. Phallus is the symbol which divides humans into male and female right from birth till their death. Therefore with time phallus became synonymous with 'linga'. But the question is whether it can mean anything other than phallus given the presence of clear stories and evidences in the Puranas? Some such evidences from the Puranas are being presented here-

दारु नाम वनं श्रेष्ठं तत्रा सनृषिसत्तमाः ।
शिवभक्ताः सदा नित्यं शिवध्यानपरायणाः ॥ ६ ॥
ते कदाचिद्वने याताः समिधाहरणाय च ।
सर्वे द्विजर्षभाः शैवाः शिव ध्यान परायणाः ॥ ८ ॥
एतस्मिन्नन्तरे साक्षाच्छंकरो नीललोहितः ।
वीरूपं च स्मास्थाय परीक्षार्थं समागतः ॥ ९ ॥
दिगम्बरोऽतितेजस्वी भूतिभूषणभूषितः ।
स चेष्टां सह दक्षां च हस्ते लिङ्गं विधारयन् ॥ १० ॥
मनसा च प्रियं तेषां कर्तुं वै वनवासिनाम् ।
जगाम तनद्वनं प्रीत्या भक्तप्रीतो हरः स्वयम् ॥ ११ ॥
तं दृष्ट्वा ऋषिपत्न्यस्ताः परं त्रासमुपागताः ।
विह्वला विस्मिताश्चान्याः समाजग्मुस्था पुनः ॥ १२ ॥

आलिलिङ्गदस्था चान्याः
परस्परं तु संघर्षत्संमग्नास्ताः स्त्रियस्तदा ॥ १३ ॥
एतस्मिन्नेव समये ऋषिवर्याः समागमन् ।
विरुद्धं तं च ते दृष्ट्वा दुः खिताः क्रोधमूर्छिताः ॥ १४ ॥
तदा दुःखमनुप्राप्ताः कोऽयं कोऽयं तथाऽ ब्रुवन् ।
समस्ता ऋषयस्ते वै शिवमाया-विमोहिताः ॥ १५ ॥
यदा च नोक्तवान् किञ्चित्सोऽवधूते दिगम्बरः ।
ऊचस्तं पुरुषं भीमं तदा ते परमर्षयः ॥ १६ ॥
त्वया विरुद्धं क्रियते वेदमार्गविलोपि यत् ।
ततस्त्वदीयं तल्लिङ्गं पततां पृथ्वीतले ॥ १७ ॥

इत्युक्ते तु तदा तैश्च लिंगं च पातत क्षणात् ।
 अवधूतस्य तस्याशु शिवस्याद् भुतरुपिणः ॥ १८ ॥
 तल्लिंगं चाग्नित्सर्वं यद्गदाह पुरः स्थितम् ।
 यत्र यत्र च तद्याति तत्र तत्र दहेत्पुनः ॥ १९ ॥
 पाताले च गतं तच्च स्वर्गे चापि तथैव च ।
 भूमौ सर्वत्र तद्यातं न कुत्रापि स्थिरं हि तत् ॥ २० ॥
 लोकाश्च व्याकुला जाता ऋषयस्तेऽतिदुःखिताः ॥ २१ ॥
 दुःखिताः मिलिताः शीघ्रं ब्रह्मार्ण शरणं ययुः ॥ २२ ॥
 मुनीशस्तास्तदा ब्रह्मा स्वयं प्रोवाच वै तदा ॥ ३१ ॥
 आराध्य गिरिजां देवीं प्रार्थयन्तु सुराः शिवम् ।
 योनिरूपा भवेच्चद्वै तदा तत्स्थिरतां व्रजेत् ॥ ३२ ॥
 पूजितः परया भक्त्या प्रार्थितः शंकरस्था ।
 सुप्रसन्नस्ततो भूत्वा तानुवाच महेश्वरः ॥ ४४ ॥
 हे देवा ऋषयः सर्वे मद्वचः शृणुतादरात् ।
 योनिरूपेण मल्लिंगं धृतं चेतस्यात्तदा सुखम् ॥ ४५ ॥
 पार्वतीं च विना नान्या लिंगं धारयितुं क्षमा
 तया धृता च मल्लिंगं द्रुतं शान्तिं गमिष्यति ॥ ४६ ॥
 प्रसन्नां गिरिजां कृत्वा वृषभध्वजमेव च ।
 पूर्वोक्तं च विधिं कृत्वा स्थापितं लिंगमुत्तमम् ॥ ४८ ॥

There was a forest named Daru, where wise men resided, who were devotees of Shiva and were constantly engrossed in meditation for Shiva (6). Once upon a time, all the wise brahmins, all of whom were the devotees of Shiva, went to the forest to pick wood (8). In the meanwhile, Lord Shiva himself, disguised in a monstrous form, came with the intention of testing them (9). He was naked, bright, decorated with ornaments, with an obscene gesture like the lustful and holding a linga in his hands (10). He intended to benefit those forest dwellers at

heart and went to the forest happily and out of love (11). Seeing him, the wives of the sages got extremely scared, became surprised and anxious, some of them even went back (12). A lot of them began to hug each other, many held each other's hands and finally with combined efforts they became engrossed (13). In the meanwhile, the saints arrived and became sad on seeing such a thing. They fainted out of anger (14). Then they became sad and asked – who is this? All of them were mesmerized by the charm of Shiva (15). When the naked demoniac man did not reply, then they began cursing him (16). Because of such deeds of yours which are against the Vedas, may your linga(phallus) fall to the earth (17). After they said that, his phallus immediately fell to the ground (18). It burnt everything that came in front of it, just like fire. It used to burn everything wherever it went. It went to hell, heaven and everywhere in this world but nowhere became stationary (20). All the worlds became anxious and those saints became extremely sad (12). They were sad and together went to Brahma (22). Then Brahma himself began telling them (31). Oh gods! Worship Parvati (Shiva's wife) and then worship Shiva, if Parvati agrees to take the form of female genitalia then this phallus of Shiva will attain stability as well (32). Then those saints worshipped Shiva with utmost dedication. Then Shiva was very happy with them and said (44). Oh Lords and sages! Please listen to what I say with respect. My phallus can only become stable if it is accompanied by a female genital symbol (45). No one other than Parvati can do this. If she agrees, then it will soon attain peace (46). Parvati and Shiva were impressed and then the linga was placed according to the rituals mentioned earlier (48).

This story is extremely obscene, but had to be mentioned because of content. The “Linga” and “tank” present in Shiva temples are the representations of the male and female genitalia mentioned in the story. The pot of water kept on top of the Shiv-Linga is to calm it down. All these things are elaborately described in the Shiva Purana. Similarly, it is written in the Padma Purana sixth section chapter 255 – Even after seeing Sage Bhrigu arrive, Shiva remained drunk and engrossed with Parvati, that is why Bhrigu cursed him –

नारीसंगममत्तोऽसौ यसमात्मानमवमयन्ते ।

योनिलिङ्गस्वरूपं वै तस्मात्तस्य भविष्यति ॥

You have insulted me by being ruttiest with a woman, therefore may you be seen as phallus and female genitalia.

There is an alternative story in the Bhavishya Purana Volume 4 Chapter 17 in this regard-

कदाचिद् भगवानत्रिर्गङ्गाकूलेऽनसूयैया ॥ ६७ ॥
तस्य भावं समालोक्य त्रयो देवाः सनातनाः ।
अनुसूयां तस्य पत्नीं समागम्य वचोऽब्रुवन् ॥ ७० ॥
लिङ्गहस्तः स्वयं रुद्रो विष्णुस्तद्रसवर्धनः ।
ब्रह्मा काम ब्रह्मालोपः स्थितस्तस्यावनशं गतः ॥ ७१ ॥
मोहितास्तत्र ते देवा गृहीत्वा तां बलात्त्वा ।
मैथुनाय समुद्योगं चक्रुर्मायाविमोहिताः ॥ ७३ ॥
तदा कृद्धा सती सा वै तान् शशाप मुनिप्रिया ॥ ७४ ॥
महादेवस्य वै लिङ्गं ब्रह्माणोऽस्य महाशिरः ।
चरणो वासुदेवस्य पूजनिया नरैः सदा ।
भविष्यन्ति सुरश्रेष्ठा उपहासोऽयमुत्तमः ॥ ७५ ॥

Once upon a time Lord Atri used to reside on the banks of Ganges with his wife Anusuya (67). Seeing his expression, all the three main gods began saying something to Anusuya (70). Siva, holding his linga, and Brahma, forgetting the Vedas out of lust, became still after being smitten by Anusuya (71). They were so much attracted towards her that they held her by force and tried to mate with her. The sage-wife got angry and cursed them (74), that the phallus of Shiva, head of Brahma and the feet of Vishnu will be worshipped by the world, and oh gods! You will be made fun of (75).

This evidence means the 'linga' also is a part of the body like the head and the feet but it can have no meaning other than phallus.

Another evidence from the 'Devi' Bhagwat also testifies this-

शम्भोः पपात भुवि लिङ्गमिदं प्रसिद्धम् ।

शोपेन तेन च भृगोर्विपिने गतस्य ॥

तं ये नरा भुवि भजन्ति कपालिनं तु ।

तेषां सुखं कथमिहापि परत्र मातः ॥ १९

- देवी भा. स्कं. ५ अ. ९

Oh mother! Shiva had visited an ashram of sages situated in the middle of a forest, due to which Bhrigu cursed him and his phallus fell to the ground. This is well known. Those who worship Shiva who carries a bonehead, how can they be happy?

All the above citations are sufficient to prove that the Shiv-linga that is worshipped by the country, that is nothing more than the genitals of Shiva and Parvati. Our proposed theory is supported by the pictures of the famous Shiv-Linga and the idols of Shiva and Parvati worshipped in the temples of Southern India, Bihar, Bengal and Assam. These pictures have been published in the 'Shivank', a chapter of 'Kalyan' published from Gorakhpur. These idols end the controversy forever that the Shiv-linga is nothing other than the genitalia of Shiva and Parvati. This disgusting and obscene form of idol worship is a mere residual of the 'Bhairavi' school of thought of leftism, where a man is called a Bhairava(a manifestation of Shiva) and woman is called goddess or Parvati and their genitalia are worshipped.

The leftism which had scriptures on spells and charms has disappeared from the country today; but the practice of worshipping Shiv-linga among the Hindus from one end to the other has not only kept that leftism alive but has also tried to prove its validity by multiple means. Even today, the temple of Somnath is being renovated after which a Shiva-linga will be established there. Big leaders of the country have collected a huge sum of 35 lakh rupees for this and it is not known how much more will be gathered. It is sad that our leaders' attention does not go towards the renovation of ancient universities like the Nalanda, instead went towards placing the Shiv-linga which will become the reason for being made fun of by the world. Lakhs of rupees of the country is spent like water for this. This can only be called bad luck for the unfortunate Arya community. Can there be a condition worse than this for the moral decline of any community?

Our chapter on the era of Puranas has become very elongated. The birth and rise of idol worship took place during this period, therefore this elaboration was

natural. The evidences that we have given from the Puranas, not only bring out the character sketches of imagined gods but throw special light on the societal decline and communal plight of that time. All these re-emphasize our thought that idol worship is just a representative of the business-mindedness, rather than devotion of different communities. The parts of this machine of minting money are the idols and temples, the places of pilgrimage, lakhs of priests who earn their livelihood using these, sages and saints.

The same Arya community which gave birth to religious texts of the highest category like the Vedas, scriptures and Smriti, which taught the entire world the first lesson on righteousness and morality; it is actually surprising for the same community of being trapped in the false thoughts and behavior of the Puranas and adopting incarnation and idol worship in place of monotheism and yoga. The gods, prayer rituals, pilgrimages, festivals, casteism, morality and techniques of the present Hindu community are all deeply influenced by the era of the Puranas. The truth is that the entire history of its decline and degeneration is an aftermath of the knowledge of the Puranas.

Readers will read in the coming chapters about the hardships this community went through, hurdles faced, tolerated insults as a result of this wrong learning. This unfortunate community is still obsessed with those teachings in spite of all these happenings. Ignorance and selfishness are still obstacles in abandoning those practices.

Chapter 9

Idol Worship and the Muslim Era–Part 1

In the mid seventh century, Islam had influenced Arab world and the neighboring countries. India has had not just trade but also religious and cultural ties with the Arab world, Iran, Turkistan and Egypt etc. since ancient times. Therefore, there was always an influx of travelers from the Arabic countries. Travelers from our country also visited those places and influenced them with their religious and cultural views. As a result, when Buddhism was at its peak over here, these countries were also converted to Buddhism. The words ‘*Bud*’ from Arabic and ‘*But*’ from Persian which mean idols have their roots in the word ‘*Buddha*’. Arabic scriptures have used words like ‘*Sameena*’, ‘*Sameeneen*’, ‘*Shaamnaana*’ for Buddhists and ‘*Bozasaf*’ for Bodhi-satva.

The signs of Buddhism were present in the Arab countries even after the prevalence of Islam. Many proofs are found regarding this. Till the beginning of the eighth century, a Vihara or monastery of the Buddhists was present in Balkh whose glory is described by them with nostalgia. Arab historians have called it ‘*Naubihar*’ which is an adaptation of the Hindi word ‘*Nav-vihar*’. The main monks from here are known as “Varmak”, and their successors later became Muslims and the Arab Caliph *Hanrursheed* etc. kept becoming the prime minister.

These countries were also influenced by the decline of Buddhism and the rise of the Puranas and religious sects like Shaivism and Shaktism became prevalent. Seventh century traveler Hiuen Tsang saw the rapid increase in the worshipping of Shiva in India and saw human sacrifice being offered in front of the idol of Durga, close to Ayodhya. He said that idols of Shiva were coming up in place of those of Buddha and the Buddhists were being outcast and tortured. He has also described demoniac people wearing necklaces made of skulls. He found the number of Buddhists equal to that of Shaivas in Iran, Afghanistan and Middle Asia as well. The summary is that as religious changes took place in our country, the Arabic countries were also not unaffected by the influences. The place where Kaaba is situated today in Saudi Arabia, is a remnant of a Shiva temple and the

Hajar al-Aswad (the black stone) over there which the Muslims respect and kiss, is the Shiva-ling idol of that temple. Even Prophet Mohammed considered it right to keep it safe for some reasons.

When these countries converted to Islam, even India could not remain unaffected. On one hand these nations were unifying in the name of 'one god, one religion, one holy book' –Allah, Islam and Quran. On the other hand, our country was destroying its ancient glory by dividing itself into polytheism, idol worship, different communities and small kingdoms. Then how would it have enough strength to face the storm of Islam getting stronger in these countries? When the Muslim attack on India took place, a man called 'Hazzaz' was the director of Iraq, Iran, Baluchistan and Makran on behalf of the Caliph of Arab. There are two reasons proposed for this attack. The first is that one of the Arabian ships was robbed by the pirates of Kutch. When Hazzaz asked Daahir, the king of Sindh for compensation for this, then he replied that the place was outside his border and therefore the demand was inappropriate. The second is that some traitors of the kingdoms under Hazzaz began to reside in the custody of Dahir. Hazzaz demanded for them too but Dahir did not agree.

As a result, Hazzaz sent Mohammed Bin Kaasim to attack Sindh in the year 712. Mohammed Bin Kaasim was only twenty years old at that time. He travelled via Iran, Baluchistan along with 6000 soldiers and attacked Sindh. The people whom Hazzaz termed as traitors and asked for custody from Daahir, their leader bribed the commanders of Dahir's army and the guards of the fort of Narayan Kot to be on their side. When time came, these refugee Muslims, along with the commanders, went against the king. The king faced Kaasim with thirty thousand soldiers. A fierce battle took place for eight days. Kaasim was about to retreat when he happened to meet a Brahmin who told him that if the flag of the temple falls down, the Hindu army will surrender because they believe that it is impossible for them to win once the flag has fallen off. The flag was somehow made to fall. When the army saw this, they began running backwards. King Dahir became wounded and fell to the ground! He was beheaded and his head was attached to a spade and shown to the army, after which his entire army ran from the place. The temple was destroyed. The same Brahmin, for greed of some reward, gave the location of a hidden treasure. This consisted of 40 देगों of gold, which were full of 17200 maunds (Indian metric for 37.324 kgs, therefore 641972.8 kgs of gold). Additionally, there were 6000 idols made of solid gold, the biggest of which weighed about 1200 kgs. There were diamonds, ruby,

pearls, sapphire etc. in large quantities which were loaded onto camels. The Brahmins and army commanders who betrayed King Dahir were all murdered on Kaasim's orders. Thereafter they destroyed countless temples and idols, robbed cities and villages, and murdered thousands of men and women. He used to go to the entrance of every village, and ask the inhabitants to surrender their valuables and convert to Islam. If they did not comply for a while, he would murder and rob them.

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The very first Islamic history of Sindh, which is popularly known as 'Chachnama' describes this incident of Qasim's attack in a different manner. It opines that there was severe struggle between the community of Puranas and the Buddhists in Sindh during that time. This historical literature is named after Emperor Chacha who was the father of Daahir. He was a follower of the Puranas and he had either killed a lot of Buddhist rulers or made them his subordinates. After him, his younger brother became the king and he was a Buddhist. Therefore, even those who had abandoned Buddhism at the time of Chacha were forced by him to adopt Buddhism again. The communities following the Puranas dethroned him and made Dahir the king. This historian says that Qasim was welcome by the Buddhists at every place and provided him with all the facilities. 'Kaka' was a known personality in Sindh, who is described as an intelligent, popular and learned person. It is written about him that when some renowned 'Jaat' feudal lords went to him and asked him whether they could raid Qasim's army at night if they had his consent. He replied that if this is what you want to do then do but listen! Our scholars and ascetics have made use of astrology and predicted that 'One day the Muslims will win over our country. People do not listen to them and cause self-damage. You know that I always stand by my decision. The books of the Buddhists have also predicted the same and it is my decision also that it is going to happen in reality.' Thereafter this 'Kaka' went to Muhammad Bin Qasim and alerted him of the thoughts of the Jaats. He also described to him the prophecies of their religious texts. Qasim welcomed him and presented him with a number of valuable rewards. Similarly a lot of commanders who were against Dahir also accepted the subjugation of Qasim. It is possible that this 'Kaka' is that traitor Brahmin and priest who is described to have sided with Qasim by many historians. This is a brief description of the first war by the Muslims invasion in India. As a result of this, our shackles have

loosened a bit fourteen hundred years later, and that too after the Muslims dividing this country into parts.

The above mentioned examples clearly show that there are two reasons behind our defeat in this battle, and they are religious and mental more than political. The first is the belief of the Hindus that the idol in the temple is a divine power of consciousness and our victory and defeat are dependent on its wish. If it is unhappy then all our efforts are fruitless. The falling of the flag is an indication of defeat. Secondly, handing over our fortune into the hands of astrologers instead of believing in our courage and hard work. What are the predictions described by Kaka, who was an astrologer himself? And where do they belong to? Nothing is known but it is indisputable that foreigner attackers were behind this, who tried taking advantage of the superstitions of Hindus of that time. It is not difficult for traitors like Kaka supporting them where there is so much communal diversity. Such superstition, blind faith, diffidence and fearfulness are a natural consequence of idol worship. The community which shivered out of the fear of an inanimate idol, how long can it stay in front of a fearless god-worshipping community. It is not that the Hindus were physically weak than the foreigner invaders. Popular historian Badayuni has written that –

“There is no community strong as Hindus among the Mughals and Pathans”. But in spite of that a lot of mental and religious factors mentioned above had weakened this community. Have we been able to free ourselves of them even today? An English writer has said that – ‘The Hindu community has neither learnt nor forgotten anything since the time of Muhammad Bin Qasim’. It is completely true.

Popular Arabic traveler Al Beruni has written somewhere that – “When Muhammad Bin Qasim won Multan, it found the temple to be the reason of the huge population and prosperity. Therefore, he left it as it was. But he tied a cow bone around the idol’s neck so that it is explicit that he is not leaving it untouched out of any devotion or belief.” Another Muslim historian writes with respect to the same temple that – “This is how this great temple of Multan remained safe in spite of the city being invaded. It remained as it is even during the three-hundred-year long reign of the Arabs. The Arabs took advantage of this temple, politically and economically. Politically, whenever a Hindu king planned to attack Multan, he was threatened saying that if he went ahead then the temple will be burnt to ashes. Hearing this, any religious and superstitious king would stop. The economic benefit was that travelers from all over India came here for

pilgrimage and used to offer something, all of which would be made a part of the treasury of the Arab ruler.” Arab travelers have said that this temple had unparalleled silver and gold. Two hundred gold coins were used to light incense sticks itself. The idol of sun god was made of timber, both whose eyes were made from precious gemstones and the crown was golden.”

In this way, Muslims took full advantage of our blind faith and foolishness. Our idols were a means to acquire a lot of wealth from Hindu devotees on one hand and offer it to our invaders on the other hand. The devoted priests were busy in their own selfish motives. They wanted their profession to continue. They were not concerned about where the wealth of the community is going to. They were only interested in securing their share which the Muslim rulers gave them. Many Muslim travelers have said that the Hindu rulers from near Multan could have very easily ended and destroyed the Arab reign, but they were weakened only by the fear of the destruction of the idols. The extent to which idol worship helped in our invasion is not a new thing in the history of the world. Many countries have had to suffer because of such blind faith. This unfortunate Arya community has not freed itself from this customary superstition in spite of having tolerated such hardships. The temple of Sindh, the first symbol of the foreign dependence of India, is still present as ruins. A big fair is organized everywhere where thousands of Hindus still worship the goddess. But Dahir who gave his life for protecting his country has become a thing of the past.

The era that is being talked of here was an era of great decline of this country. Communalism by the followers of Puranas was at its peak, and Hindu temples were centers of enormous wealth. An Arabic writer Ibn Nadeem has written about the infinite glory of a temple in Gujarat based on the writings of another writer – “The temple in the capital of the kingdom of Emperor Vallabhacharya of Gujarat has twenty thousand idols made of gold, silver, iron, brass, ivory and all kinds of valuable stones and gems. One of the golden idols is 12-foot-high and rests on a golden throne. This throne is situated in a dome shaped huge hall. This hall is decorated with clean pearls and red, blue, green, yellow jewels. A fair takes place annually. The king himself visits there on foot. Sacrifices are offered in front of this idol once a year and humans offer to sacrifice themselves too.” Therefore, the desire to attain heaven by destroying idols was not the only reason behind the attacks on these temples by foreigner Muslims. But another major reason for them being attracted here for the infinite prosperity of these temples. The followers of the Puranas had acquired this wealth by tricking people and

they too were robbed of it in the same way. Apart from this, they were defeated and insulted for centuries as a result of being separated from the almighty.

Three hundred years after Muhammad Bin Qasim attacked India, the Mahmood of Ghazni also attacked this country as a result of greed and intentions of robbing. He invaded India seventeen times in thirty years and ruined entire north western India. He destroyed the temple of Nagarkot and stole 280 quintals of gold and silver utensils, 300 quintals of gold, 800 quintals of silver and 8 quintals of pearls, diamond and jewels. He held two thousand Hindus hostage in the Thaneshwar attack and took them to Ghazni. 'Ferishta' writes that Ghazni appeared to be a city of Hindus at that time. He found 6 idols of solid gold in the Madura attack which were decorated with 11 precious gemstones. He captured and took along so many slaves from there that he tried selling each one for 2.5 rupees in Ghazni but could not find buyers. Mahmood had said about Madura that there stood thousands of palaces made of marble, strong as the belief of the believers. There are countless Hindu temples here. A city cannot be made this beautiful without spending infinite wealth. It is impossible to build such a city without hard work and efforts for two hundred years.

Following this, he attacked the famous Somnath temple in Gujarat. There were countless gemstones engraved in this huge temple. A huge gong, 16 quintals heavy, was hanging from a golden chain. Also there was a 4-meter-tall idol of Shiva floating in space, whom he destroyed by his own hands and robbed the countless gems. He took the idol to Ghazni. He broke it into pieces, fixed one of the pieces in the stairs of the mosque and another in his palace staircase. He got a mosque built in place of that temple which is still present.

This country had hardly seen such bad times prior to this. The idol of Shiva in the Somnath temple which Mahmood himself destroyed using his mace used to hang without a visible base. The Shaivas viewed this miracle with curiosity and the blind faith and then economic prosperity of the innocent Hindus were taken advantage of by the temple priests and their savior Kshatriya kings. This idol was made of iron. A magnet was situated in the temple at the top and the bottom. It was because of magnetic attraction that the idol seemed to float. When Mahmood Ghaznavi tried destroying it, the priests requested him not to and promised a lot of wealth in return; but he replied that he was a destroyer of idols not a seller of idols.

There are two apparent reasons behind this request of the priests. Firstly, the idol was full of precious gemstones. Secondly, their profession was based on a

miracle and would come to an end.

The idol did not help the devotees of Shiva and was destroyed to pieces within moments by a barbarian and non-believer. Three hundred years before this when Muhammad Bin Qasim attacked, the 'goddess' could neither help her devotees nor protect herself. Three hundred years later, once again a popular Indian Shiva temple was destroyed and a mosque was built at that place, but this time too Shiva's prayer did not end. Both the incidents mentioned above are historical events, not our imagination. The mosques present in Somnath, Kashi, Ayodhya and Mathura that were made after destroying temples stand testimony to the to the futility of idol worship and declare it as the main and strongest reason for the oppression of this country. Al Beruni, who was an Arabic traveler and was present in India at the time of Mahmood's invasion, describes how pitiable the political and social state of India was in the following words –

“India is divided into very small kingdoms. All the kingdoms are independent and are always busy in mutual wars. Brahmins are so eager to protect their rights and the malevolence of casteism is spreading such that the Brahmins attack the Vaishyas and Shudras with swords when they see them reading the Vedas and present them in front of the royal court where their tongues are cut. The Brahmins are free of all kinds of state taxes. Hindu women become Sati. The Hindus do not go to any country; they do not see any community with respect. They consider themselves and their community the superior most.”

But at the end, even these Brahmins and Kshatriyas had to bear the fruits of their sins. They too were sold in the markets of Ghazni for two rupees each.

Muhammad Ghori attacked India around 250 years after Mahmood Ghaznavi in the 12th century. Prithviraj came forward, defeated him and captivated him, but freed him after some punishment. He attacked six times, was defeated and held captive and freed after taking the wealth back. The mutual discord between Prithviraj and Jaichandra gave Muhammad Ghori a chance to invade India once again. Jaichandra was defeated by Prithviraj after which he invited Muhammad Ghori to attack and promised to help him against Prithviraj. Prithviraj faced him boldly this time too. Muhammad Ghori's army was about to retreat when Jaichandra's army attacked from behind. Prithviraj was held captive and taken by Muhammad Ghori. This is how the lamp of Hindu independence was put out forever.

Two years after this Muhammad Ghori attacked Kannauj. The army of Jaichandra comprised of fifty thousand Muslims at that time. They attacked

Jaichandra's army instead during the time of war. The Rathore army was defeated and Jaichandra drowned in the Ganges along with his horse after being wounded by an arrow of Qutubuddin Aibak. Aibak destroyed 2000 temples in Kannauj and carried robbed gold and silver back to Afghanistan on 400 camels. Thus, Jaichandra had to repent for his treason soon.

At the time when north-western India was being attacked by foreigners, even South India was not in a good state. Mahmood Ghaznavi attacked Madura in the south out of greed for robbing temples; but this did not have a long lasting impact. He went like the wind and returned in a similar way. It has been written earlier that India had trade relations with the Arab since ancient times. Southern India is surrounded by the sea on three sides, therefore there was a constant influx of Arab travelers through ships. When Arab adopted Islam, circumstances changed. Earlier the residents there were just traders, but now they had the passion to promote their newly adopted religion. Thus they now began propagating their religion along with trade activities. This was at a time when Hindu community was weakened by the legendary Purana religion. It had lost its self-confidence, glory, courage and everything else. The behavior of Brahmins and Kshatriyas with the people of lower castes was inhumane. The ancient religion which was simple and comprehensible had lost its attraction amongst the maze of the Puranas. The religious beliefs of the Hindus had crumpled seeing the condition of their temples and worshipped idols at the hands of Muslim invaders. Therefore, it was not unfavorable for this new religion to establish itself.

Hindu power was getting destroyed by mutual civil wars. Seeing the growing power of the Muslims, every king was eager to take advantage out of helping them. The Muslims began getting big posts in the kingdom, taking advantage from which they started building large mosques here and there. All the facilities of the kingdoms were available to them easily and Muslims began settling their colonies. They even obtained the permission to establish a separate court from the state and separate judges were appointed. These Hindu kings left no stone unturned in showing hospitality to their guests from abroad. The Hindu community is anyway known for their hospitality. Then both their political and religious policies had become bankrupt at this time. They had lost the capability to distinguish between their kin and outsiders. Muslims took full advantage of the occasion and slowly began their task of promoting their religion. The mythological religion was definitely weaker and less attractive in front of it, and

therefore turned out to be incapable of competing with it.

The pure feeling of the ancient Vedic religion to convert the world into Arya had exhausted. There is no provision for including people from other religions in the mythological religion of the Puranas. Even if there was a provision, there is no place for newcomers in the Hindu community because of the malpractice of caste by birth. Monotheism, prohibition of worshipping inanimate objects, brotherhood and equality in Islam were unquestionably better than the Purana religion in the absence of the wisdom of the Vedic religion. As a result, not just Hindus of the lower castes, but also a few emperors from Southern India converted to Islam. An emperor converting religions has a deep impact on his subjects as well and this is what happened. Lakhs of Hindus gradually converted to Islam. Scholars knowing the Puranas could not solve the worries of Zamorin, therefore the emperor of present day Kodangallur, Cheraman Perumal converted to Islam. He was named Abdurrehan and he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia. From there, he sent a lot of missionaries to Malabar who constructed 11 mosques and promoted Islam. The king did not return from there and dies four years later. Even today Zamorin wears Islamic clothes and shaves his head on the occasion of coronation. A Muslim places a crown on his head. He is considered outcast from the caste post his coronation.

As a result of this emperor's influence, Islam was widely promoted there. An Arab traveler Masoodi found a settlement of 10 thousand Muslims in Chola in the 10th century. Ibn Battuta too saw a huge and prosperous Muslim population everywhere, from Khammam to Malabar. Goa was under the Muslims. Hinor was also a kingdom of Muslims and there were 4 thousand Muslims settled in Mangalore as well. In a nut shell, there were Muslim colonies on the entire coastline of South India and not just Muslims but Hindu rulers had gotten huge mosques constructed.

Nazdawali converted a lot of Hindus to Islam in Madura and Tiruchirappalli in the thirteenth century. Baba Fakhruddin was a sage who lived in Pennukoda; he converted the ruler there to Islam and got a mosque constructed. That time also Bijanagar was a large empire of the south. The king's army had ten thousand Muslim soldiers whom the king respected a lot. The king got a mosque made and the Quran was looked upon with respect and honor.

The Muslims took full advantage of the blind faith and ignorance of the Hindus. They made use of deceit, slyness and diplomacy as and when required for propagating their religion. How did Islam spread to Maldives? Ibn Battuta writes

in this regard that all the residents here were first idol worshippers. Every month a demon used to come here from the sea. Whenever the residents saw it they made an unmarried girl dress up and sent her to a temple which was situated at the sea shore. But the residents of the island got freed of this because of the blessings and prayers of an Arab Sheikh Abul Barkat Barbari Magrabi who had come here by chance. Seeing this miracle, the inhabitants and emperor Shano all converted to Islam. It is strange mystery that who was this demon coming from the sea and how did the Sheikh kill it. It is possible that it was an evil person who was involved in such deeds, taking advantage of the prevalent superstitions to scare the people and the Sheikh had held him captive. Then it was a deed of some Muslim whose conspiracy the Sheikh took advantage of. A similar incident is described about the king Koyala of Dehpattan of Madras. One of his ancestors converted to Islam and got a mosque constructed. The description of his conversion was heard by Ibn Battuta from the Muslims here. There existed a tree in place of the present mosque, which had the '*Kalma*' written on it and which was used half by the Hindus and half by the Muslims. The diseased used to get healthy because of it. The emperor converted to Islam after witnessing this miracle. A Mosque in Buddhapattan is described to have a similar miracle. There, a mosque existed at the seashore. A Brahmin broke a piece of wood from its ceiling and installed it at his home. As a result, the Brahmin's home caught fire and he died after burning.

The Muslims whom the rulers appointed to higher positions in their courts used to become the ruler as and when they found an opportunity. Numerous examples of this can be found in history. Jamaluddin was the brother of Takiuddin who was a minister of Emperor Sundar Pathay of Coromandel. He used to get ten thousand horses for the kingdom every year from Arabia and sold them. He became the king after the king died. Jamaluddin obtained the weight of seven thousand bulls, gold and jewels and Takiuddin was appointed as his helper.

Another technique was being made use of at that time for the propagation of Islam. Muslim poor men used to disguise themselves as Hindus, lived in temples and studied the internal conditions there. Then they used to pass this information on to their missionaries and Muslim rulers who took full advantage at the right time. Ibn Battuta says that he met a hermit at a temple near Chandapur who was actually a Muslim Sufi and talked only through actions. Renowned Parsi poet Sheikh Saadi stayed in the temple of Somnath for a few years, disguised as a

Hindu saint. In this way, Muslim saints were easily and peacefully taking advantage of the ancient religion all over the country and promoting their own thoughts. In 1197, Sheikh Moinuddin Chishti converted monks of the Ajmer temple, Ramdev and Ajaypal to Islam. The Sufis of this monastery played a major role in the propagation of Islam in the future. Sadruddin gave birth to the Khwaja community in the south who are staunch Muslims today.

In the North-west, lakhs of Hindus were made to convert to Islam by the fear of swords; but there were many on the other hand who adopted Islam out of dissatisfaction from olden opinions and idol worship in particular. Valazeri, an Arab traveler of the ninth century writes that the beloved son of the king of Aseevan, between Kashmir, Kabul and Multan, fell seriously ill. The king summoned priests from temples and asked them to pray to gods for his life. The priests came and said on the second day that the gods have blessed him with life. But the king's son died some time later. The king was very sad. He went and got the temple destroyed right then. The priests were beheaded. The king summoned the Muslim traders in the kingdom, enquired about the principles of Islam and converted to become a Muslim.

On one hand several Hindus were becoming Muslims, and on the other hand a few simple hearted Muslims used to witness the amazing miracles of temples and used to get trapped in the hoax of priests. An Arab traveler, resident of Baitulmukaddas, describes the temples of Sindh in the tenth century and says that "there are two amazing idols made of stone in Havrava. They appear to be made of gold and silver. It is said that whatever is asked in prayer over here is granted. There is a reservoir full of green water. This water is beneficial for wounds. The expenditures of priests are met by '*Devdasis*'. People log bring their daughters and offer here. I saw a Muslim here who was worshipping both these idols. Thereafter he went back to Veshapur and became a Muslim again. These two idols were magical. No one could touch them with his hands." The miracles on whose basis the country was robbed for several years, disappeared somewhere when these Muslims broke the miraculous idols to pieces and made them a part of the mosque stairs. Even today those idols are free of miracles of any kind.

Some contemporary Arab travelers and scholar writers picturized idol worship and its misfortunes. This literature is available even today. We cite it in brief here-

Ibn Nadeem has described various kinds of idols and their shapes. He saw

Goddess Kali with four hands, blue color, teeth protruded, elephant skin with dripping blood on the back, a crown made of skulls and a necklace of skulls around the neck. He describes the idol of sun god and writes that four horses are tied to a cart, one of them carries the idol. Its devotees bow to it, encircle it, light incense sticks and play drums. The temple has a lot of wealth and a lot of priests who control all this wealth. The chariot of the idol of the moon god is said to have four swans. The idol carries a big ____ which is known as 'Chandraketu'. It is worshipped on the fourteenth day of the darker fortnight. He has also described the importance of Ganga (holy river Ganges).

Another writer, Mutkallim Mahtar, describes Shiva, Kali, Mahakali and Linga-worship. He has described saints and sages in his book too. He has written with regard to Brahmins that they worship cows, consider crossing the ganga a sin and do not include an outsider in their religion. An another writer Abdul Kareem Shaharstani has also described worshipping trees.

These Arab travelers have described the '*Devadasi*' tradition in temples with great disgust. They have painted interesting pictures of devotees who sacrifice their lives in front of idols in temples. Jumping into the ganga and killing oneself is called as very ordinary. Abu Zaid Sairafi says that – “These people believe in rebirth so much that burning alive in fire is an ordinary thing for them. When someone wants to burn oneself, he takes permission from the king. He parades around markets, cymbals are played. A crown made of flowers and containing fire is placed on his head. He keeps burning slowly and finally jumps into pre-lighted fire and burns to death. He has described another person taking his own heart out using a knife in order to sacrifice himself. An interesting description is of a third person in the temple of Multan sacrificing himself by wrapping himself in cotton dipped in oil and burning.

The extent to which the blind faith related to idol worship has affected the Arya community cannot be explained better than by the examples cited above. What can be better examples of what can man do in the frenzy of communal superstition?

The Arab travelers cited above, along with other similar descriptions, throw some more light on the history of idol worship. These travelers are said to belong to the 9th to 11th centuries. The Hindu religious beliefs and prevalent idols described by these people have no specific description regarding the idols of Vishnu or the principles of incarnation, which is the base of Vaishnava school of thought. This makes it clear that the birth of Vaishnava community and

incarnation, took place long after the communities of Shaivas and Shaktas. Or it is possible that it was not widely prevalent in North west India during that time. Some scholars are also of the opinion that the Sun god of that time later became Vishnu because the mantras of the Vedas use the word 'Vishnu' for Sun god at many instances. Among the twelve names of the sun god mentioned in the Vishnu Purana chapter 15 part 1, Vishnu is the first.

तत्र विष्णुश्च शुक्रश्च जज्ञाते पुनरेव च ।

अय्यर्यमा चैव धाता च त्वष्टा पूषा तथैव च ॥ १३१ ॥

विवस्वान् सविता चैव मित्रो वरुण एव च ।

अंशो भगश्चादितिजा आदित्या द्वादश स्मृताः ॥ १३२ ॥

Vishnu, Shukra, Aryamma, Dhata, Tvashta, Poosha, Vivaswaan, Savita, Mitra, Varuna, Ansh and Bhaga, are the twelve names of the Sun god.

Chapter 10

Idol Worship and the Muslim Era–Part 2

Muslims ruled Delhi post the invasion of Muhammad Ghorī. The Pathans ruled here for more than three years. They too destroyed countless temples and places of pilgrimage. No one could perform pilgrimage without obtaining permission from the king. Every Hindu was made to pay *zaziya* (a form of tax) as per Muslim religious legislation. Qutubuddin Aibak attacked Hansi, Delhi, Meerut, Koyal, Ranthambore, Ajmer, Gwalior, Kalinjar. he destroyed thousands of temples, and killed lakhs of Hindus with his swords.

Muhammad Ibn-e-Bakhtyar, a slave of Qutubuddin invaded Bihar and Bengal. He destroyed thousands of temples on the way, in the city of Vishwanath (a Shiva shrine). He burnt to ashes a Buddhist monastery in Bihar which was home to 12 thousand monks and beheaded all of them. Iltutmish attacked Ujjain some time later and robbed wealth worth crores after robbing the temple of Shiva. Hindus were destroyed for three hundred years this way.

It was during the reign of these Pathans that Taimur from Afghanistan invaded this country. He called his soldiers and said – “You know that the people of Hindustan (as India was called then) worship idols and are atheists who worship the sun. It is an instruction of god and his messenger that such infidels should be murdered. I believe that we should invade India for the sake of Jihad.” Hearing this, everyone shouted “Amen” and he invaded India in 1389. He set villages and cities on fire wherever he passed by and killed or captivated innocent men and women. He got ten thousand Hindus killed in Bhatner within an hour. He had two lakh hostages by the time he reached Delhi. Therefore, he ordered that men and women prisoners above fifteen years of age be killed. This was followed. Streams of blood flowed. An endless empire of robbery, genocide and destruction of truthfulness existed for five days. Lakhs of Hindus were killed. He attacked Meerut after Delhi and fifty thousand men and women were killed while countless young women and kids were captivated. Every soldier had twenty to thousand captives. He then went to Haridwar from here. A festival was going on over there. There was a huge population of travelers. He ordered open

killing in the fair. The waters of the Ganga turned red with blood. Readers may themselves estimate the fate of the temples. He robbed and killed and returned to Kabul. He took so much wealth from here that his army received salary before time for the coming eight years.

Now entire North-West India was under the Muslims. Hindu community was equivalent to being extinct. It always lacked the power to retort. When every soldier would kidnap and control a hundred people, can he be called a human? Even a hundred sheep and goats cannot be controlled easily by one person.

There came a time when the Pathan reign declined and the Mughals became the rulers of this country. During the reign of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the Islamic twilight became dimmer. They tried behaving similarly with Hindus and Muslims. Their empire had expanded to the whole of India except distant south. But Muslim laws were predominant in the state machinery still. In spite of all this, this time was one of peace in many ways. It cannot be said that the Hindus had religious independence during this period. Because the officers in the government were mainly Muslim and every Muslim considers it his duty to propagate his religion. Therefore, it is pointless to expect religious tolerance towards Hindus from them. The condition of the Hindus was a little better than earlier, but a slave is always a slave.

Aurangzeb ascended the throne after imprisoning Shah Jahan. He was a staunch Muslim and looked down upon Hindus with disgust. He went to Kashi and ordered the priests to stop reading and studying. He got famous temples demolished and built mosques. The idol of Vishwanath (a Shiva temple) was thrown into a well by the priests for the fear of being destroyed. Even today there is a mosque in the place of the temple. He did the same in Mathura too and murdered thousands of Hindus. The mosque built by Aurangzeb is present right in the center of Mathura even today. He sent an order to the ruler of every province that all the temples be destroyed, idols be damaged and schools be shut down. He went to the fair of Kurukshetra and murdered lakhs of Hindus for no reason. He restarted collecting Jaziya from the Hindus. Thus, the Hindus began to be devastated once again, after a brief period of peace.

The Hindus were once again disturbed by the atrocities of Aurangzeb and stood up against the Muslim forces after tolerating torture for approximately five hundred years. Guru Govind Singh in Punjab, and Sivaji in the south gathered the strength of an army and began to oppose Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb grew old while fighting and died while fighting at last in the South. Thus, even the

Mughal empire began to head towards a decline.

The successors of Aurangzeb tried to satisfy the public but were unsuccessful. The Sikhs established their rule over north west India. The Rajputs and Marathas established their dominion over central and southern India. The Mughal empire was now remaining in and around delhi only. The Hindus once again got a chance to organize themselves and become independent, but their mutual differences, which they are not free of even today, became an obstacle in their path and they remained where they were.

The brief standalone history of the beginning of the seventh century till the end of the seventeenth century, demonstrates well our mental weakness borne out of idol worship, and the social and national decline of the Hindu community as a result of this weakness.

Idol worship was prevalent in Europe too till the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Christians over there worshipped idols, and the Pope and the monks were exactly in the same position as the priests and the abbots. Europe was in a very bad state. The Arab Muslims destroyed the whole of Europe in the ninth century and churches were destroyed there once again. Lakhs of Christians were killed. But there was a severe religious revolution in Europe in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther gave birth to the Protestant Christianity, which brought to an end the idol worship in Christianity, and the deeds of the priests and Pope. The beginning of the current development of Europe can be traced back to this time. The truth is that the community which steps away from god and considers idols and other inanimate objects as worship-able, has to always go through difficult times of darkness and torture. The Hindu community is a vivid example of the same. What a big price it had to pay for idol worship! Hindu temples were destroyed time and again, idols were knocked down, and became a part of the staircases in mosques and palaces. Unlimited wealth was robbed from places of pilgrimage, millions of innocent Hindus had to even sacrifice their lives for this. But even then, new temples were built in the place of old ones. New idols were built and established in the place of destroyed ones. Uprooted pilgrimage places were settled once again. Is idol worship so attractive in reality? Does it provide so much spiritual peace that this community cannot survive and move ahead without it? The truth is that neither of this is true. At its core lies the same business minded mentality which motivates a trader to begin his business from scratch even after bearing a heavy loss multiple times.

The so called pilgrimages rely on temples to run their business, and the temples

in turn rely on idols. The priests earn lakhs from this. The priests get a salary and offerings. Arrival of travelers add to their joy. The shops of traders are run due to the travelers and the state will have an income from taxes. Big organizations, feasts, charity after returning from pilgrimage is a result of this idol worship. Then why should it not be kept alive, if at all? This is why this cycle has continuously been running since fifteen hundred years.

Seeing this plight of the Hindu community, many wise people in the Muslim era raised their voices against idol worship. Guru Nanak took great efforts in Punjab to free Hindus of this blind faith. Other Sikh gurus after him also kept criticizing idol worship in a similar manner. The sayings of the gurus have been compiled in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. We present some idol-worship related stanzas here-

पाथर ले पूजहि मुगध गँवार ।
ओहि जा आपि डूबे तुम कहा तरनहार ॥
बुत पूज-पूज हिन्दू मुए, तुरक मुए सिरु नाई ।
ओहने जारे, ओहने गाड़े, तेरी गठी दोहु न पाई॥
पूजि शिला तीरथ बनवासा ।
भरमत डोलत बने उदासा ॥
घर महि ठाकुर नदरि न आवै ।
गल महि पाहणु लै लटकावै ॥
जिस पाहन कउ ठकुरु कहता ।
ओहु पाहणु लै उस कऊ डुबता ॥
गुनहिगार लूण हरामी । पाहण माव न पार गिरामी ॥

Guru Govind, in the tenth book, criticizes idol worship and writes –

१ - इक विनु सौन चिनार
 भज्जन गड़न समर्थ सदा प्रभु जानत है करतार ॥
 कहा भयो जो अति हित चित कर बहु विधि शिला पुजाई ।
 पा न थके पाहन कहि परसत कछु कर सिद्ध न आई ॥
 अछत धूप दीप अरपत है पाहन कछु न खड़है ।
 ताँ में कहाँ सिद्ध है रे जड़ तोहि कछु वर दैहै ॥
 जो जिअ होत देत कछु तुहि मन वचन कर्म विचार ।
 केवल एक शरण स्वामी बिन यों नहिं कतहि उधार ॥

२ - काहूँ लै पाहन पूजि धरयो सिर काहूँ लै लिंग गरे लटकायो
 ।
 काहूँ लखयो हरि आवाची दिशा महि
 काहूँ पछाह को शीश निवायो॥
 कोऊ बुताने को पूजद है पसु कोऊ मृतान को पूजन धायो ।
 क्रूर क्रिया उरझयो सभ ही जग श्री भगवान् को भेद न पायो ॥

Even the sayings of devotee Kabir have been compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib. Kabir has criticized idol worship in clear words. He has written in his couplets that –

१ - पाती तोरे मालिनी पाती पीता जाऊ
जिस पाहन को पाती तारै सो पाहन निर जीऊ॥
पाषाण गढ़ि के मूरति कीनी देकै छाती पाऊ ।
जे एह मूरति साची है तउ गढ़निहारे खाउ ॥
भातु पहिति अरु लापसी करकरा कासारू ।
भोगन हारे भोगिया ईसु मूरति के मुख छारू ॥

२ - जो पाथरू को कहते देव । ताकि वृथा होवे सेव ॥
जो पाथरू की पाई पाय । तिसकी थाल अंजाई जाये ॥
अन्तरि देव न जान अंधु । भ्रम का मोहिआ पावै फन्धु ॥

न पाथर बोलै, न किछु देई। फोकट कर्म निष्फल है सेव ॥
जो मृतक को चन्दन चढ़ावै। उसते कहहु कवनि फल पावे ॥
जो मृतक को विष्ठा माहि रुलाई । तां मृतक क्या घाटि जाई

॥

कहत कबीर हौं कहहुँ पुकार । समझ देख साकत गवार ॥

३ - देवी देव पुजहि डोलहि पारब्रह्मा न जाना ।
कहत कबीर अकलु नाहिं चेतिआ विषेया सिउलिपटाना ॥

४ - पाथर पूजे हरी मिलैं तो हम पूजें पहार ॥
या पाथर से चक्की भली जो पीस खाई संसार ॥

Dadu was a disciple of Kabir. He too criticized idol worship like Kabir and opposed it. He says that –

पत्थर पीवे धोड़कै, पत्थर पूजे प्रान ।
अंतकाल पत्थर भये, भाव डूबे अज्ञान ॥

Another popular saint Malukdas was a contemporary of Akbar. He too refuted idol worship, pilgrimage etc.

Veerbhan, the founder of the Satyanaami community, was a contemporary of

Dadu. He has given '12 instructions' in the 'Aadi Updesh' of the Satyanaamis. He writes in the first instruction that –

‘Believe in just one god. Don’t worship anything made of clay, stone, wood or anything else’. Similarly, he has written in the eighth instruction that don’t bow in front of any idol.

Prannath, a Gujarati saint, lived during the time of Aurangzeb. He too opposed idol worship. Another saint Charandas was also opposed to idol worship. Ramcharan, the founder of the Ramasnehi community has also criticized idol worship.

Khechar, whose disciple was Naamdeva, gave a preaching to him which proves that he too was a staunch opponent of idol worship. He says that –

A god of stone does not speak. Then how can he free us of our sorrows in life? People consider an idol made of stone god, but god is different in reality. If a stone idol could fulfil our wishes, why would it break on falling down? People who worship gods carved out in stone lose everything owing to their foolishness. People who say that the god of stone talks to his devotees, and people who listen to it, are both ignorant and foolish. Devotee Raidas has opposed idol worship and incarnations in his discourses.

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There have been three popular saints in the state of Maharashtra- Sage Tukaram, Samarthguru Raamdaas and Sage Gyaneshwar. These saints too have refuted idol worship and the concept of incarnation.

Tukaram says with sorrow about idol worship –

ज्यानें देहासि निर्मले, जीव त्याने वसरले।
ज्याच्या सत्तेने वर्तति, मूढ त्याने न जाणती।
जैसे गर्भान्ध जन्मती, आपल्या मातेला नेणती।
तैसे नेणूनी चेतन पूजिदगड अचेतन॥

‘The almighty that showered his blessings and made the human body for the living world, living beings ideated that very god. Creatures live and behave in the governance of the almighty, and foolish people cannot see that god. Such

ignorant people do not understand the real intangible god and instead worship inanimate stones etc.’ Saint Tukaram further writes –

ज्वांला टाकिने फोडीती, त्याच्या पुढे हाथ जोडिती ।
ज्यांच्या शोच घूप घटविती, त्याला देव ठरविती ॥
पूजा उपचार अर्पिती, अत्यादरे नमस्करीति ।
परितो ऐके बोले न पाहे मूढ त्यासी मानी ताहे ॥

Meaning, ‘these worshippers of idols hit and break the stone with a hammer while building the idols, and then join their hands to pray in front of the idol. The stone that they call god and pray, they bow in front of it with great respect. How surprising it is that the stone neither hears, nor speaks nor sees, but ignorant people are considering it god himself.’

Saint Tukaram has described the modernity of idol worship in the following words –

दगडाचे देव पूर्वी नन्हते जाणु जनहें अज्ञान झाले जेन्हा ।
जनहे अज्ञानी दगडा मानिले, गुरुसि त्यागले मूढ पणे ॥

‘Oh humans! You should understand it with surety that gods made of stone did not exist in ancient times. When people became ignorant, those ignorant people started believing in stones and abandoned the actual almighty because of their foolishness.’ True idol worship is the worshipping of five intangible idols. He has described this in the following words-

माता पिता आचार्य अतिथि, गुरु सचेतन मूर्ति ।
त्याला शरण तूँ जावसी, तरी च कल्याण पावसी ॥

‘Oh living beings! Mother, father, teacher, guest and godfather- these are the five animate idols. If you take refuge under them, only then will your wellbeing be taken care of.’ Saint Tukaram has also refuted incarnation in the following words-

नाहीं रूप नाहीं नाव नाहीं ठौव धराया ।
जेथे जावे तेथे आहे बिडुल माय बहिन ॥

Meaning, ‘the almighty has neither taken a form, nor taken birth and nor does he have a name. My true mothers and sisters are getting adjusted wherever they go.’ He has described the qualities of god at one place and said-

ऐसा चेतन निराकार त्यासी कल्पिती आकार
परिपूर्ण अविनाश, त्यासी मानिति विनाश॥
अव्यक्तासी व्यक्ति मानुनी करी स्थूलभक्ति।
तोचे मूढमती नर व्यर्थ जन्म ले पामर ॥

‘Foolish people imagine a shape and form of such a formless god, they make him have a form by believing in incarnations etc. and the god who is the complete and indestructible among all, they consider him destructible too. They consider the god who cannot be described equivalent to a person and worship an idol, his bulky representation. Such people in the world are foolish and sinful. Their birth is useless.’

Samarthguru Ramdas of Chhatrapati Shivaji considers god as divine and that true devotion lies in serving the living world and chanting the pious name of the lord. Saying this in his book, ‘Daasbodh’, he writes further-

सहज सोडूनि सायास, हाचि कोणी एक दोष ।
आत्मा सोडूनि अनात्मयास ध्यानी धरती ॥
परितो धरिता हि धखेना ध्यानि येती व्यक्ति नाना ।
उगेचि कष्टविति मना कासा बीस करनी ॥
मूर्ति ध्यान धरिता सायासे, तेथे एक चि एकदिसे भासे
नए तेचि भासे, विलक्षण ॥

Meaning, ‘this is the biggest weakness of humans that they abandon the simple meditation towards god mentioned above and instead start praying inanimate idols. But in reality, they cannot pray to god through idols, because while worshipping an idol, they begin to see multiples idols which distract the devotee’s mind and become the reason for his suffering rather.’

When a devotee takes pain to worship an idol, he sees something other than what exists. He begins experiencing something that he should not at that time. This leads to his mind being restless and full of grief.

He has expressed his thoughts regarding incarnations in the following words-

देवास देहधारी कल्पिती, तेथे नाना विकल्प उठती ।
भागणे त्यागने विपत्ति , देह योगे ॥- (दास बोध, दशक १४,
समास ८)

Meaning ‘there are already enough difficulties being faced by the idol worshippers, and they have to imagine god having a particular bodily form on top of it. That is when their mind is full of a lot of thoughts. If the god attained a body, then he must have been trapped in enjoyment, sacrifice and distress by a body.’ The same book ‘Daasbodh’ mentions at one place –

धातु पाषाण मृत्तिका, चित्रलेख काष्ठ रेखा ।
तेथे देव कैचा मूर्खा भ्रांति पडली ॥

‘Oh fool! Where is god in metal, stone, clay, picture or wood? You have been worshipping him as a result of a delusion.’

Saint Gyaneshwar, has authored an interpretation based on the *Geeta* named Gyaneshwari, in a poem called ‘Ouvi’ in Maharashtra which is very popular. It has been translated to many other languages as well. While translating the shloka of the Geeta – अवजानन्ति माँ मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् beautiful thoughts regarding idol worship etc. have been presented, some part of which is as follows –

जैसा कृत निश्चय वायां गेला जैसा काणा प्याला ।
मज परिणाम पाहोला गला अमृताचां,
तैसे स्थूलकारि नाशीवंते भरवंसा बांधोनि चित्ते ।
पाहती मज अवि नशातें, तेरी केचा दिसे ।

‘Just like someone drinks a sweet dish and expects to have the fruits of nectar, someone who considers a mortal inanimate idol and other objects as god in his mind and tries viewing it as indestructible sees all his efforts going down the drain.’ Similarly, Gyaneshwar has further refuted incarnations and written that –

गंव आकार एक पुढा, तंव हा देव येण भाव भजता ।
मगतोची विगडलिया टांगकिती, नांहिं म्हणोनि ।

Whenever these worshippers of idols see some stone etc. in front of them, they start worshipping it considering it the almighty. And when that shape gets distorted somehow, they abandon it saying ‘this is not god’.

Similarly, Saint Vashweshwar of the Lingayat community used to say that – there is no other god except for one almighty. Leave it! Stop it! It is a sin to even think of other gods and goddesses. It is a fornication to even remember gods other than his highness. Only the almighty who is one is to be worshipped by us. When our body itself is a temple then what is the need for other temples? Sometimes a vessel is god, somewhere a tree is a god, and somewhere a stone lying on the road is a god. Friends, look! There is no place remaining to set our feet as a result of these countless gods. Believe my words. God is one, and he is the almighty of us all.

Shivakkivar was one of the greatest sages of south India. He has written-

नइ कल्लै दैव मेरु वालु पुष्पं सात्तिये,
सुत्तिवन्दु मोन मोनेनरु सोल्ल मंत्र मेत्ता ।
नइ कल्लम् पेसुमो नाद नुल्लि रुक्कै यिल्
सुट्टु सट्टी सट्टवम् करिचुवै यरी यूमौ ॥

‘What is the use of encircling an idol while enchanting mantras when god resides inside ourselves? The vessel used to cook food does not know the taste of that food. The idol built and established by man does not even speak.’

Manikkavaachkar, a Tamil priest of south India has written the following while criticizing idol worship-

कल्लिलुम् शेमिबलुमो इरुधान एगड लृकण्णुतले

‘Can god, who is as beloved as the pupil of the eye, make a stone or metal his place of residence?’

As a result of the continuous destruction of temples and idols by the Muslims, not just the sensible Hindu community but even the commoner community began to experience the fruitlessness of the polytheism of the Puranas and idol worship. The citations of different saints given above are a clear evidence of the ideology, which was prevalent in the country during that time. These opinions of these sages also had a strong impact on the country at that time. The Shakti-

collection of the Sikhs and the contemporary rising in the Maharashtra were main events where they played a vital role. It is possible that the history of the Hindus was written in a different manner, but Hindus facing tortures by Muslims for one thousand years had not yet fully recovered when European communities set their feet here. Their shrewdness did not give a chance for the broken strength of the Hindus to get organized again. Maybe the Hindus were destined to bear the fruits of their remaining sins some more!

There is one more thing that maybe these saints, devotees, and learned men were not scholars of the highest degree. They were not just ignorant of the ancient Sanskrit Vedic literature but most of them did not know the Sanskrit language at all. They did not have complete knowledge of the Vedic monotheism and prayer rituals. They did not have the austerity like Mahatma Buddha nor did they possess wisdom like that of Shankar Swami that could have influenced Indian thinking. Therefore their influence was limited. They still did a great job at improving the society as per their power and capability.

Chapter 11

Idol Worship and present Reformation Era

This country went through a chaotic period once again in between the decline of the Muslim reign and the rise of the British empire. But peace was established soon. The announcement of religious freedom by the British gave a chance to the Hindus to give religion a thought after a thousand years. With the arrival of the European communities, this country saw the arrival of Christian priests. They had begun their task of propagation in some form or the other during the era of the Muslim empires. Their area of influence were the coastal states in the south in the beginning and only the lower castes tortured by the upper castes were influenced by them.

As soon as the British ascended the throne, multiple Christian missions of Europe established their promotion centers all over India. They opened missionary schools at every nook and corner and started educating the youth in Christianity and western civilization other than English language. The state did not provide any direct support to propagation of Christianity, but missionary schools and hospitals were given financial support generously. As a result, educated Hindu community began to be slowly and indirectly influenced by Christianity through these educational institutions. Many youth converted to Christianity and many others experienced the specialty of Christianity and contemptuousness of Hinduism, which was just a cage of conservatives. The most delicate and weak point of the ancient religion, idol worship, was the strike point of these priests.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, popular social reformer of Bengal, experienced this new crisis and founded the '*Brahmo Samaj*'. He made every effort to free the Hindu community of the superstition of idol worship. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a scholar of Arabic, English and Sanskrit. He has refuted idol worship wisely and rationally in his writings. Instead of presenting a lot of citations from his writings, we present just two for the contemplation of our readers –

“Many learned Brahmins are perfectly aware if the absurdity of idolatry, and are

well informed of the nature of the purer mode of divine worship. But as in the rites, ceremonies, festivals of idolatry, they find the source of comforts and fortunes, they not only never fail to protect idol worship from all attacks, but even advance and encourage it in the utmost of their power, by keeping the knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people. Their followers too, confiding in these leaders, feel gratification in the idea of the Divine Nature residing in a being resembling themselves in birth, shape and propensities; and are naturally delighted with a mode of worship agreeable to the senses; through destructive moral principles, and the fruitful parent of prejudice and superstition.”

(Works of Raja Rama Mohan Roy, Vol.I, p.70)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy writes at one place in his autobiography –

“The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism but to a perversion of it; and I endeavored to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient book and authorities which they profess to revere and obey”.

Following Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Brahmo Samaj and its leaders did good reform work in the state of Bengal. But the successors of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the leaders of Brahmo Samaj, could not escape the influence of the newly arrived religion of Christianity and western culture. As a result, Brahmo Samaj was no longer the supporter of pure Indian culture, but rather flowed with the flow of western culture and it could not go beyond Bengal.

The ‘Prarthana Samaj’ founded by Govind Ranade also did commendable work against idol worship in Maharashtra, but its condition also turned out to be somewhat like Brahmo Samaj. That too was limited to the English educated people of the state of Bombay and its name cannot be heard too.

Both Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj worked commendably towards protecting the Hindu youth from the growing influence of Christianity. The Hindu community will be forever indebted towards them for the same.

At this very time, when the country was standing on the verge on religious and social revolution and Christianity was spreading its wings here under protection from western nations, a third great man entered as Swami Dayanand. This scholar had many specialties compared to the other great men and saints whom

we have described above. He was a proponent of pure Indian civilization. His entire education took place in Sanskrit as per the ancient Indian style and all his thoughts were full of Indian civilization and culture.

How Swami Dayanand gained knowledge is deeply related to our predicate topic. He was just 13 years old at that time. He was performing a “Shivratri’ (a Hindu festival celebrated annually in honour of the god Shiva) prayer in a Shiva temple along with his father. His father dozed off as a result of sleep but Dayanand kept awake. Read the incident that took place thereafter in his own words-

“An incident took place when I was awake and alone in the temple. A lot of rats came out and were running around on the sheaf of Shiva. They started feeding on the rice that was offered to Lord Shiva. I was awake and alert and watching this act of the mice. As I was watching I wondered that what it was. Is this the Shiva about whom we had heard the story of the silent pure idol, of the strong ‘Pashupatastra’ (a weapon), of the huge roaring that we had heard on this day last time during the fasting prayers? This is how I became restless with worry. I thought that if this was actually that strong, glorious, killer of ailments and demons, then why can’t he drive away these small rats from his body? Thus I was trapped in a source of worry and my brain started thinking. I began asking myself if it were the same god present in front of me who can walk and talk, eat and drink, carries a trident, plays a drum and can curse humans.”

The above incident shook this child’s belief in idol worship. He tried waking up his father and finding out the solution to this doubt. But when he did not receive a satisfactory reply, he returned home immediately and broke his fast by having food. This ordinary incident did not end here; this urge to know the actual Shiva and finding out the obvious enlightened Dayanand, and he devoted his entire life to this discovery.

Another incident instilled in him the feeling of quietude like Mahatma Buddha, which led him towards a life free of worldly desires. His sister and uncle, whom he dearly loved, had passed away. Dayanand says – “I thought that everything in this world is unstable and agile. Then what for should I live in this world and live my life like worldly people?” He did the same – when he was about 20-21 years old, exactly when his father wanted to get him married, Dayanand abandoned home forever and devoted the rest of his life to learning, yoga, social reform and charity. He scanned every nook and corner of India in search of scholars and saints. He used to go wherever he learnt the presence of a scholar or

saint. He travelled across dangerous forests, mountains and snowy peaks during this endeavor. After 12-13 years of struggle and self-learning, Dayanand met Swami Virjanand, blind and unparalleled scholar of Mathura. Virjanand was popular as the 'Grammar sun' in the whole of north India as a result of his knowledge. He knew many scriptures by heart in spite of being blind since birth. If he heard a shloka once, he would never forget it. Swami Virjanand had a Sanskrit school in Mathura, where he stayed for three years and studied and Vedas, and other scriptures. His age was approximately 39 years around that time.

If Dayanand had not met dandy Virjanand, he would have possibly spent the rest of life in yoga and mortification. But this saint changed the course of Dayanand's life. Virjanand asked as fee from Dayanand an uncanny promise that he will devote his entire life towards establishing the glory of Arya scriptures and refuting of other scriptures. Virjanant opposed the opinions of the Puranas, but, being visually impaired, he was himself incapable of promoting the ancient Arya religion in accordance with the Vedas. Now he had found a student in the form of Dayanand, through whom he could fulfill his desires. Dayanand bowed to his wishes and fulfilled it till his last breath.

Dayanand shook the whole of India, from Punjab to Bombay and from Kathiawar to Bengal by virtue of his determination and deep knowledge. Wherever he went, he challenged the scholars to prove idol worship from the Vedas. He travelled across the country and gave thousands of explanations and interpretations for the scriptures. Dayanand's style was so influential and heart touching that listeners used to be spell-bound. His unbeatable rationale used to make the opposition bow. Scared of his reasoning and knowledge, his opponents went to the extent of saying that he has attained sainthood. No one can praise or benefit in front of him.

Swami Dayanand provided many interpretations from the scriptures pertaining to idol worship. He influenced kasha, the center of Sanskrit knowledge many times by his strong knowledge and eloquence. The opponents either did not face him or got defeated and resorted to uncivilized behavior like burning the scriptures. But there were many such occasions when the opponents visibly accepted their defeat.

Once upon a time a learned scholar provided an explanation to Swami Dayanand on idol worship after pledging that he will either defeat Dayanand and make him offer to his idol, or will get defeated and accept his opinion. The debate on the

interpretation of scriptures lasted for a long time. At the end, the scholar accepted defeat and immersed his idols in the Ganges. Many people at different places, influenced by Swami Dayanand's rebuttal of idol worship, immersed their idols in the Ganges. Swami Dayanand was tempted many times that if he stopped refuting idol worship then his so called monastery will be given supremacy or the entire Hindu community will accept him as their leader. But he always had one answer – "Should I fulfill your wishes or follow the instructions of god?" He was attacked multiple times, he was poisoned many times, threatened in ways more than one, but he never compromised regarding his views on idol worship. Priest K.J. Lucas, who had heard Swami Dayanand's talks in Farukhabad in 1877 and met him as well, told that "He used to speak against idol worship with such boldness, clarity and confidence that I was surprised at Farukhabad's people welcoming him warmly. I remember his saying, when I asked him that if a cannon was pointed towards him and he was asked to bow in front of an idol lest he was shot what would he do? He had answered "I would ask them to fire". Dayanand was so fearless that he used to strongly criticize idol worship even when he stayed in temples.

Swami Dayanand had a definite opinion that idol worship is the center of all the hardships faced by the Arya community and that it cannot ever be propagated by the Vedas. In his eternal writing, Satyarthprakash, he has expressed his views on idol worship in the following ways-

1. When the almighty is omnipresent, then containing him in one thing and not feeling him elsewhere is like considering a great emperor being the king of a small hut instead of his large empire. Look! It's such a grave insult. This is how you insult god also.
2. When you consider him omnipresent, then why offer flowers plucked from the garden? Why do you rub and apply sandalwood? Why do you light incense sticks? Why do you ring bells, and gongs? He is in your mind, why do you bow? He resides in food, then why do you offer? He is there in water, why do you have a bath? Because god is present in all the substances, do you worship the omnipresent or the mortal? If you worship the omnipresent then why do you offer flowers and sandalwood to wood and stone, and if you worship the mortal then why do you lie that "We worship god"? Why don't you tell the truth that "We are worshippers of stone"?

-Satyarthprakash, Samullas 11

At another instance, he has listed the flaws of idol worship in the following

manner-

1. The mind can never be stable in the form, because it keeps wandering from one storm to another. And in its full capability, it wanders and never finds a destination. It does not remain active because of being nebulous, but becomes stable and lost in joy, thinking about the quality-karma-behaviour; but if it had a form then the entire world's mind would become stable because a worldly man remains trapped in woman, son, wealth, friends etc., but none of these lead the mind to stability, and only the formless can help the mind become stable. Thus performing idol worship is a sin.
2. It leads to offering crores of rupees in temples and becoming poor, and it leads to carelessness.
3. Men and women meeting in temples gives rise to adultery, quarrels and diseases.
4. Man spends his life uselessly by not working hard and considering it a means to righteousness, wealth, work and liberation.
5. Priests of different kinds of idols, having contradicting views destroy the unity and harm the nation by heading in different direction,
6. They rely on it and believe in their victory and the enemy's defeat. They get defeated and the enemy enjoys the kingdom and wealth. They themselves no longer stay independent and experience several joys as a result of others ruling them.
7. When someone says that we will place a stone on your chair and your name, then the latter gets angry and beats up or abuses the former. Similarly, why should the god not punish someone who have stones I the name of god in their hearts?
8. They get carried away and roam from temple to temple, across countries and experience sorrow, destroy the goodness of hard work, and righteousness, and get robbed by thieves.
9. They offer money to evil priests, who use it for street-walkers, women, alcohol, meat, quarrels which destroys the root cause of the lord's happiness.
10. They do not respect parents and elders, instead worship idols and become ungrateful.
11. They cry and weep when someone breaks those idols or steals them.
12. Priests and priestess lose the sacred love between man and woman as a result of company of outsider women and men respectively.
13. The servant-master relationship is destroyed due to non-obeying, and mutual enmity is created,
14. People who worship the inanimate end up having an inanimate wisdom,

because the inertia of the goal spreads to the soul for sure.

15. God has made the fragrant flowers and other substances for removing odour and medicinal purposes, but these priests pluck them to offer and destroy them midway, otherwise they would have spread their fragrance and purified the atmosphere. Flowers mix up with sludge and produce odour instead. Did the almighty lend fragrance to flowers in order to offer them to stones?
16. The flowers and sandalwood offered to stone decay and rot finally and fill the air with odour similar to muck, thousands of living beings die and rot similarly. Such are the consequences of idol worship. Therefore it is right of learned men to abandon worshipping stones. Those who have worshipped stones, worship still and will worship have neither been able to escape yet nor can they ever escape the above consequences.

It is possible that seeing the above list, some readers accuse Swami Dayanand of exaggeration. But those who are aware of internal conditions of places of pilgrimage and temples, would never do that. Swami Dayanand had himself witnessed the internal working and organization of the monasteries and temples of this country, therefore the disadvantage of idol worship that he has listed above are no exaggeration. Swami has said and written so much against idol worship that if we start collecting all of it, it would end up in a complete book. Therefore we are not giving more citations for the fear of elongation and we request the readers interested in knowing more to go through 'Satyarthprakash' and 'Rigvedadibhashya Bhumika' written by Swami Dayanand himself. Many of his accounts throughout his life also throw sufficient light on this topic.

No scholar before Swami Dayanand had revolted against idol worship this openly in this country. Neither has someone tried presenting the adverse consequences so clearly in front of the people. Shankar and many saints and sages after him also abandoned idol worship, but it did not have the strength and fearlessness that we can see in Swami Dayanand. Possibly they did not completely have a look at the dire consequences of idol worship and considered it just a different way of worship, rather than a sin. As a result, post their death, their followers either compromised with idol worship or themselves adopted it in some form or the other.

The uneducated Hindu community is still trapped in the same delusion of idol worship. The educated section of the society is neutral about it. In their opinion, it is okay if someone does not indulge in idol worship and there is no harm in

those who indulge in it. If they reach a temple or its door by coincidence then they bow to the idol. Otherwise they have no special relation to idol worship, nor do they have any particular devotion towards it. If someone tried proving idol worship as a means to pray to god, they agreed. They also accepted anything that someone said against it.

‘Religion is a main reason for the rise or decline of any community’ is a principle accepted universally which everyone has to accept sooner or later. People who are caught in the materialistic flow of the western civilization, they forget it. This country was at the pinnacle of the world as a result of religious reformation and religious decline is what brought it to the trough of downfall.

Swami Dayanand wanted to rescue the Arya community out of this downfall. Idol worship is one of the main reasons behind the decline of Arya civilization; Swami Dayanand had understood this fact well. The description of Shivratri suggests that apparently his birth took place to publicize against idol worship. Every great man in the world has a special message of his. In our opinion, this is the thought and message that Swami Dayanand had.

Arya Samaj, founded by Swami Dayanand, is a living, aware institution of our country at this time which has done commendable work against idol worship, but recently it is facing the tendency to stop the dividing nature in the name of communal tolerance and national unity. Nothing much is being said against idol worship from its altar. On the other hand, the progress towards idol worship is still doing its best. In such circumstances, the lax attitude of the Arya Samaj will prove harmful to the country and society. If the mistake of compromise is made in the name of tolerance, then Arya Samaj, like other communities, will get lost forever in the chaotic mindset called ‘Hindu religion’.

Mahatma Gandhi is another great man of this era. His prime workspace has been the politics of this country, but even then he expressed his religious views from time to time. Mahatma’s thoughts were very much affected by the thoughts of numerous saints and scholars of this country. But it seems like he did not get any special occasion for studying the ancient Vedic literature. He was always troubled by his limited Sanskrit knowledge, he has written this fact, with great sorrow, in his autobiography. It is possible that this is why his views on religion were often undecided and unstable.

The ideology of Mahatma Gandhi, like many other saints, remained like “All religions are means to attain god and all are right”. Therefore he never expressed his fearless approval regarding any controversial religious subject. A follower of

this school of thought can never do. This thought process had a fatal impact on the life of the Hindu community. When the ordinary religions of the world became superpowers through the progress of their propagation, Hindu (Vedic) religion remained stagnant and its immortal message could never reach the other countries. The propagators here kept publicizing their religion, culture and civilization till the onset of the Buddhism era. They had not forgotten the Vedic saying of making the world Arya.

Mahatma was not an idol worshipper himself, nor did he believe in it, but he did not consider it a sin. We have already mentioned earlier that his religious views were unstable and kept changing from time to time. He has himself accepted this himself in his speeches and writings. We consider it appropriate to write as it is, the last opinion that he has expressed on idol worship. He writes –

“One fellow brother has sent me a newspaper cutting. There is news in that that a temple in my name has been built and my idol is worshipped over there. I consider this a distorted form of idol worship. The one who has constructed this temple, wasted his money, showed the innocent villagers the wrong path, and insulted me by laying out a wrong blueprint of my life. This does not prove the meaning of idol worship, instead shows its meaninglessness. Spinning for one’s livelihood or for independence is true worship in my opinion. Following the instructions of the Gita, instead of reciting the Gita like a parrot, is true respect for the Gita. The recital of the Gita will be considered appropriate only till the extent till which it will help follow the instructions in the Gita. The imitation of man’s strengths, not his weaknesses, is true prayer. We push the Hindu religion to the edge of decline by building an idol of a living man and worshipping it. Truth is that god alone knows the heart of man. Therefore instead of worshipping a man, living or dead, it is safe to worship and pray to that god which is complete and a form of truth. This can give birth to a thought that whether keeping a picture is a type of worship? The tradition of preserving photographs is expensive for sure, but I have been considering it innocent and tolerating it till date. If I am promoting idol worship, directly or indirectly, because of it I will let go considering it humorous and harmful. If the temple owners replace the idols with a center for manufacturing khaddar, then it will be desirable from all perspectives, and they will be saved from the sins they are committing now. People can weave cotton in that home for livelihood. Others weave for prayers. Everyone should start wearing khaddar. This is the karma according to Gita. If this is truly followed in life, then the Gita and I can be

worshipped truly. Such worship is harmful and worth abandoning.”

Mahatma, like many other European thinkers, did not consider the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as epics. He did not believe in Rama and Krishna's existence as humans. His views on incarnation would not be irrelevant here. Mahatma has written in his interpretation of the Gita that –

“Krishna from the Gita is complete pure knowledge in the form of an idol, but is imaginary. The person who is the most righteous in his time, is worshipped by the prospective public as an incarnation.” Similarly he writes elsewhere – “The god is definitely one, unparalleled. He is infinite and inconspicuous. Majority of humans have not known him. He is omnipresent, can see without eyes and hear without ears. He is formless, nebulous. He is not born. He does not have a father, mother or son, but is still worshipped by people as father, mother, lady and son. However, he is none of them.”

- (Young India, 25 September, 1924)

“We praise the qualities of Rama. He is not the Rama of Valmiki or of Tulsi-Ramayana. I tell a person going through intolerable pain to remember Rama. But this Rama is the son of Dashratha, not the husband of Sita. He cannot be the Rama with a body. The Rama who resides in our minds cannot be having a body.

- (Pratap, Lahore, 20 April, 1928)

Believing all this, he used to enjoy singing “Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram” in his prayers. Adding adjectives like ‘Raghupati’, ‘Raghav’, ‘Sita’ to Rama is a riddle for thoughtful people. The common people still consider the Rama he mentions as the Rama of Ramayana. Mahatma Gandhi had been in touch with the Ramayana authored by Tulsi since childhood and his thoughts remained constant at times in spite of being far-fetched from the understanding of the brain.

If you want to see a contemporary example of how the outbreak of idol worship took place, then go and visit the Delhi situated *Rajghat*, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi. On the mausoleum of Mahatma, where a square platform has been built on his remains, flowers, garlands and money are offered constantly. On one side of this memorial is a picture of Mahatma Gandhi on a copper plate, to which flowers and cash are offered in the same way, like the memorial, like they are offered in front of idols. In front of the memorial and the copper plate,

people not just join their hands and bow their heads but they can also be seen prostrated on the ground. There is a priest over there just like temples, who removes the flowers from the copper plate when it gets covered with flowers, and quietly invokes other visitors to offer flowers. On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti (his birth anniversary), a huge idol of Mahatma Gandhi is placed near this memorial, and that too is worshipped in a similar manner. Such memorials, idols and temples are being built at many places. And it is possible that Gandhiji too, like Mahatma Buddha, begins to be worshipped as an idol in spite of lack of a clear instruction from him and against his wishes. Great leaders of our country, who are fans of Mahatma Gandhi, are encouraging this practice in one way or the other, instead of stopping it. They believe that this will instill in people the feelings of respect and devotion towards Gandhiji and they will follow him, but the history of idol worship tells that this notion will turn out to be just presumptuous.

Chapter 12

The Impact of Idol-worship on Human life

‘Life’ is another name for the synthesis between body and soul. Therefore the rise and fall of human life is directly dependent on the progress and decline of these two. We have to analyze here the extent to which idol worship is instrumental or obstructive in this regard.

Worshipping god is considered the universally accepted means to self-advancement. When the soul removes its instincts from the outer world, becomes busy in remembering god then we call that closeness as worship. This is the worship through which the soul of a living being gets rid of all the malfunctions and gains divine qualities. But if we get closer to the inanimate world or non-living idols in place of god, then it is natural to acquire the qualities of these. There is a popular saying – we will become as is our company. But an idol neither possesses qualities of god, nor is it a form of god therefore it cannot be a means to attain god. What can a living being obtain from a non-living idol? He is in need of a power bigger than his own in order to gain something. It can be said that an idol belongs to god’s incarnation at least, if not to god himself! But god neither incarnates nor is it needed, we have already proved this. Proving incarnation of god is equivalent to degrading him and placing him in the same category as living creature. Xenophanes, a Greek philosopher, has described the mentality of such people in the following words –

“Negroes imagine them as black with flattened noses; the Thracians with blue eyes and red hairs, if oxen and horses could paint, they would represent their gods as horses and oxen.” (*The problems of Philosophy* by Janet and Seailles p.249)

The condition of these people who believe in incarnations is the same. This Greek philosopher probably did not know that Indian authors of the Puranas have completed those imaginations by human himself by giving birth to incarnations like Hayagriva (having the head of a horse), Narsimha (having a lion’s head), boar, turtle and crocodile.

If idol worship were limited to hero-worship then mankind would not have gone through such bad times. Praising their great ancestors and drawing their pictures as well as building their idols are not wrong things to do. But their viability is only till the time we follow their footsteps and make their lives our ideal. Only then can their pictures or idols can produce enthusiasm in our lives. But considering them god, believing them to inanimate power and expecting protection or help in return for prayer and remembrance are the heights of foolishness. The popular Hindu custom of idol worship is enough to indisputably prove that they consider idols an inanimate authority. The reaction towards dignity of life while establishing idols in temples also leads us to the same end result. As a result, the Hindus have always been of the belief that if on one hand where the idols have the capability of protecting and helping them, then on the other than they can even cause harm. This is how idols of Hindus gained the place of god in every sense. Even today the educated society might not have such a belief, but the lowermost classes of Hindus believe in the same and have these feelings. The saying that we think of the invisible god through idol or that is a means of our opinion and prayer is completely imaginary and such statements are made in order to escape any attacks against idol worship.

It is outside the scope of writing the undesirable caused to the Hindu community by the above belief. Our pitiable condition during one thousand years of the Muslim era and irreparable dependence are the unfortunate results of this belief. Till the time that the Hindu community possesses this belief, it is our definite belief that it cannot attain any kind of freedom, be it national, societal or religious. People who do not give any place to religious views in nation building make a mistake. Religious beliefs are what build our personal life. Collective personal life is the only reason that uplifts any society and the society in turn builds the nation finally. Therefore it is not wise to have happy dreams of nation building, neglecting religious views.

Religious belief brought idolater and barbarous communities like the Arabs, Turks, and Mughals under the same flag within a short span of time and organized them. Superstition led towards the present plight that Arya community, which is known for its absolutism even today by dividing it into different communities, castes and sub-castes. King Dahir's defeat was the result of this blind faith! Invasion of Somnath by Mahmood Ghaznavi was also an aftermath of the same. Rajput soldiers believed that god Somnath would protect them. But as soon as the temple was destroyed, they accepted their defeat and

lost all their courage. How was it possible for the devotees to get protected when their god itself had been defeated? On top of it, there was no dearth of traitor astrologers like Koka in order to destroy whatever courage they had remaining. This same belief was working at the core of the continuous attacks by Muhammad Ghori, Taimur, and Nadir Shah on this country. It is a rule of nature that even the smallest of creatures like the ant react. Hindus were taken in counts of lakhs to Ghazni etc. places by enslaving them like cattle. One of Taimur's soldiers had so many slaves that it became difficult to arrange for them. They were cut to pieces like salad in the absence of things to eat. But they could not do anything in spite of being present in such large numbers. Does this not prove that their mental state was worse than insects? We do not want to repeat these sad stories, which have been mentioned in this book already. We just want to prove that religious beliefs play an active role in the rise and fall of any community; and this cannot be ignored.

We see in the world that the nature of every person is different from another in one way or the other, owing to their role and responsibility. Every society needs some rules in order to organize these differences. Religion is another name for these rules. Similarly the principle of monotheism is as important as religion in order to tie the human society in one thread. But when man begins to make multiple gods, holy books and communities as per his nature and interest, then society divides itself into multiple parts and becomes the cause of universal chaos. The tortures and injustices in the name of god and religion that have taken place in the history of the world stand testimony for this. Probably, the present society which is against god and religion is the result of this chaos. The thinkers imagined 'Shiva' as per their imagination. Lovers of meat, alcohol and love gave birth to 'Shakti' as per their interest. Jolly people gave birth to Vishnu and his rebirth, Krishna. Each of them composed different scriptures, known as the Puranas, in praise for their respective gods whom they worshipped. Their idols were also built in accordance. The Shivlinga of Shaivas, the ghastly Kali form of Shaktas and jolly Krishna of the Vaishnavas are the images of those communities. The effect that the above mentioned idols would have on their worshippers is left to the readers' discretion. This is not just an object of approximation; rather their impact on these communalists' character can be explicitly seen.

Seeing an idol or a picture can only have two kinds of impact on us. First, we can remember the person whose idol it is. But this is possible only when we are

aware of the life of that person. If he possesses all the qualities, or used to possess, then feelings of dedication and love fill our minds. If he is of an evil nature, then feelings of disgust and hatred are developed instead. Secondly, the beauty and defects of the idol, along with the art skills of the sculptor have an impact on the viewer. Since no idol is of the formless god, none of them can attract our attention towards god. The sun, the moon, the galaxies and amazing creatures that he has made trees that fascinate the world, mountains loaded with flowers and creepers and forests are the only things that can remind us of him. It is only a distraction to abandon these, and trying to find god in the creations of the most talented sculptors.

If you want to see the harmful effects of idol worship on man's life from a social perspective, then see the internal organization of the Hindu places of pilgrimage. You can witness superstition, sanctimony, hypocrisy and misconduct everywhere. You will also find people who believe in the utility of idol worship. But these people are often those who have come from outside and have made the temples their residence, as they find it pure. Otherwise, the local residents believe in idol worship just for the sake of earning a living. Their main profession is to influence and scare travelers coming from far off places by reciting imaginary stories of miracles by these idols; and extracting the last coin from their pockets through hypocrisy and sanctimony. Sometimes, the priests don't even leave the travelers with enough money so that they can return home. Finally the priests lend them and extract more as interest. Ladies are usually more emotional and fall prey to them badly. They make these women donate their gold and silver jewelry too to the idols. The advantage taken by these people of the scrupulousness of these travelers can only be estimated on seeing through one's eyes. It is no hidden fact that these places are home to malpractices like adultery. Not just the priests, but even great monks have gained reputation for such deeds in temples. Several incidents have taken place, like the King of Bombay (a prominent monk of the Vaishnavas) Livil case, the cries of the Govind Bhawan of Kolkata and Hansa-Damodarlal story of the temple of Shrinath. Several other similar incidents are taking place behind the curtains of idols even today.

It is difficult to even estimate the amount of wealth being wasted like water on idol worship. Millions and billions were spent on the construction of some temples, whose design is such that it is not possible to put it to good use. Dark rooms, which need the light from a lamp even during the day, are representatives

of the darkness spread by idol worship. Immovable property adjacent to temples providing an annual income of millions, offerings made that are way larger – all of this is the wealth of the community which is being extremely misused over here.

Lakhs of orphan kids of the country starve for every grain of food, but stone-hearted Hindu community remains oblivious of these living idols and donates all their wealth to idols of stone which fill the stomachs of lakhs of idle saints, priests and monks. Different kinds of delicious dishes, not affordable even by the rich, are made for offering at these temples with great difficulty and in great quantities. Most of the time, it is saved by the temple staff and then sold at shops. Enormous wealth of the Hindus is spent on train journeys every year in the name of pilgrimage. Apart from this, we can see the difficulties faced by them in these journeys during festivals and fairs. We often read in the newspapers about the contagious diseases that spread during such occasions in these places.

If the wealth of the Hindu community, which is spent on idol worship in this manner, is spent for promoting education then many universities can be run without any aid from the government, through which a lot of productive work can be done towards protecting the Arya culture. The hardships of orphans, helpless, old people and widows can be eliminated by constructing places for them. Hospitals can be started and the poor patients can be helped. There are countless such tasks which cannot be done due to monetary shortage. But we do not have money for all of them. But, you can extort as much money as you want from us by cheating us in the name of imaginary gods and religion.

Many attempts were made for protecting the Hindu community, and are still being made but all of them are unsuccessful in one way or the other. How can a few reformist Hindus oppose countless agents in every village and city whose livelihood is based on idol worship? This idol worship is the means of earning for many, be it the priest of the village, the clergyman, the Brahmins, the exorcists (of ghosts and spirits), or the imam of the mosque. Then tell us how can a handful of reformers uproot it? The followers of Guru Nanak and Kabir must have possibly experienced this! At last, they were forced to accept idol worship in one form or the other. A clear example of this is the placing of the guru Granth Sahib in place of the idol in Gurudwaras.

This community, which comprises of those who rely on idol worship for a living, severely opposed Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Dayanand had to intake poison several

times for such reasons. Idol worship is an extraordinary disease of the Hindu community; therefore unusual treatment is necessary for its opposition.

Chapter 13

Idol Worship and Yoga

Yoga is the one and only means to attain god. Other popular methods can only be a part of it, not complete. All the methods to worship god that are prevalent in the world, are indebted to it in one form or the other, but are incomplete. In order to understand this technique, it will not be inappropriate to give a brief description over here. Sage Patanjali has written in his world famous book ‘Yogdarshan’ that “योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः” yoga is the prevention of the instincts of the mind, meaning keeping them under control. यम, नियम, आसन, प्राणायाम, प्रत्याहार, धारणा, ध्यान, सामधयोऽष्टावङ्गिनि - self-control, rules, posture, breathing, withdrawal, belief, meditation, and trance, these eight components of yoga have been described.

“अहिंसासत्यास्तेब्रह्माचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः” - Non-violence, truth, abandoning theft, celibacy, apathy are all self-control.

“शौचसन्तोषतपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः” - Hygiene, satisfaction, sacrifice, introspection and blasphemy are rules. The remaining six components are – posture (keeping the body still in one position comfortably), breathing (exercises to keep breath within control), withdrawal (abstinence from desires), belief (mind being stable at one instance), meditation (mind becoming stable and void of any subject), and trance (immersion in the contemplation of god).

The aforesaid Yoga technique is complete and absolute. All the techniques that have become popular as yoga till date are different forms of this. It is often said that this technique is so arduous that walking on this path might rarely help man attain god. Attaining god is the supreme and last chapter of a man’s life, then how is it surprising if yoga is difficult? But we have become used to various cheap, but false, methods of attaining god, like – you can attain salvation by the mere sight of an idol; a one-time bath in a river or a water body can take you to heaven; some special sign or symbol can get you liberated. Not just this, you can possess it only by naming it once. When attaining god is such an affordable deal then who is foolish enough to think of self-control and rules and take the pain of

posture or breathing or spend time in introspection? It is worthless to even discuss belief, meditation and trance- which are rare components. These kinds of false temptations have brought us far away from the ancient worship-techniques. We are not unaware of the 'yoga with eight components' but we have left it behind in front of affordable tricks. Even our educated society is separated from it today, leave alone the commoners.

Idol worship does not find any use in yoga, nor is it related in any way. 'The mind becomes stable in the idol' is just a new statement which has been given for influencing the educated society. Not just India, but the history of idol worship across the world does not help this statement. If this were the intention behind placing idols in temples, then what is the need of the whole law and legislation of dignity? What is the meaning of bathing, sandalwood-coating, dressing and ornaments? What is the purpose of offering food, performing aarti (worshipping with songs sung), waving fans, putting to sleep, staying up? What is the signification of standing in front of the idol, joining hands in front of it, and prostration? Can the noise from a conch shell, a gong, a bell and other musical instruments help in stabilizing the mind? The entire atmosphere of temples is against the above mentioned statement in every possible way. The Puranas, which nourish idol worship do not mention this technique, nor is the worshipping techniques prevalent in temples have a compilation somewhere till date.

The way temples are constructed also validates our stand. If the intention behind idol worship were stability of the mind, then the construction of temples would have been completely different. If worshippers etc. sit in big temples, in front of idols, with the intention of stabilizing their mind, then it will become difficult for them to even see the idol. Or would Shiva temples would be so congested that even 4-6 worshippers could not sit there at a time. There is a Shiv Linga in the middle, Shiva's wife Parvati on one side, his son Ganesha on the other side, and his vehicle bullock on the third side. Now can you tell how can worshippers stabilize their minds? If you say they should concentrate on the Shiv-Linga then what is the aim of placing the other idols over there? We have seen people worshipping the ox as well, which is quite natural. Therefore, the construction of all the temples indisputably proves that at least idol worship was not promoted with this intention ever. If the intention behind idol worship was to stabilize one's mind, then idols would have been placed in open spaces, around which worshippers could sit and meditate. Belief is the sixth component of yoga. The

worshipper has to first practice the first five components in order to prepare for it, and only then does he attain the right to belief. But this is not needed for the idol worshipper. In his case, going to the temple and the mere sight of the idol frees him of all his sins. Moreover, if he happens to serve the idol or its residence even by mistake, even the biggest sinner becomes entitled to heaven. There are numerous such stories in the Puranas. A thief came to a temple for stealing the idol's ornaments. There was some mud on the way which stuck to his feet. He wiped off his feet in the temple yard. A snake bit him while he was returning after the theft. The messengers of evil and god had a debate over taking his soul to hell or heaven. He got heaven at last because he had wiped the mud in the temple by mistake. As a result he received the fruits of plastering the temple.

The following shlokas from the Bhavishya Purana chapter 17 are other examples-

नैरन्तर्येण यः कुर्यात् पक्षं सम्मार्जनार्चनम् ।
युगकोटिशतं सायं ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥

Meaning – If someone sweeps the Brahma temple for one fortnight, then he stays in heaven for one billion ages.

कपटेनापि यः कुर्यात् ब्रह्माशालां सुमानद ।
संमार्जनादि वै कर्म सोऽपि तत् फलमाप्नुयात् ॥

Whoever does plastering etc. in a temple of Brahma even by fraud and deceit also receives the same rewards as those who perform it with dedication.

“कल्पकोटिसहस्रैस्तु यत् पाप समुपार्जितम्”
“पितामहघृतस्नानं दहत्यग्निरिवेन्धनम्”

Meaning- The sins accumulated over millions of years can be eliminated by bathing Brahma in ghee. Similarly, the duties towards idols of gods mentioned in the Puranas like bath, rinse, incense sticks, oblation, lamps, construction of temples etc. have been said to have great importance. Therefore there is no difficulty in reaching the conclusion that idol worship is in no way related to the ‘belief’ of yoga. Wise people constantly attack idol worship. In response to these, idol worshippers make fruitless efforts of building philosophical castles on the basis of this imaginary saying. Therefore, we will give a thought to the

philosophical aspect of this statement.

It should be understood what are meditation and trance before thinking about it and the difference between them. According to the opinion of yoga-

“देशबंधच्छित्तस्य धारणा” - Belief is binding the mind to any one place. “तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम्” - Meditation is maintaining that knowledge and belief uniformly. “तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः” - When the light of the goal remain in that meditation and the meditator becomes oblivious of his form, then it is called trance. Parts of the body like navel, heart, front part of the nostril, front of the tongue etc. are popular for concentrating the mind. However, “यथाभिमत ध्यानाद्वा” or what is desired is concentrated upon also helps in stabilizing the mind – this is written at another place. People cite these words and say that what is the harm if we have belief in or meditate in an idol? But people forget that believing in an object helps us gain knowledge about it, not god. These are called accomplishments in yoga and obstacles in trance, the last component of yoga. “ते समाधावपसर्गाः व्यत्थाने सिद्धयः” - these are obstacles in the way of trance, but accomplishments in a state of yoga.

Two symptoms of meditation are given in yoga or narcissism. It is written regarding remembering god that - ध्यानं निर्विषयं मनः”, meditation is retracting from all worldly subjects. The meaning is that till the time our mind is indulged in worldly objects, it cannot concentrate on god; when an object, which consists of both god and the outer world, is concentrated upon then complete knowledge about it can be obtained. If its god then complete knowledge about god, if it's related to our body then knowledge about the body and if it is related to the world then complete knowledge about it can be obtained by the worshipper.

“नाभिचक्रे कायाव्यूहज्ञानम्” - the navel contains complete knowledge of the body's construction through belief, meditation and trance. सूर्ये “संयमात् भुवज्ञानम्” - the knowledge of the being is obtained through abstinence through the sun. “कण्ठकूपे क्षुत् पिपासानिवृत्तः” - controlling the pulse gives freedom from thirst and hunger. The fruits of these through similar sources, is said to be accomplishment of different kinds of knowledge and science; but not attaining god. A yoga performer can see and hear the happenings of far away using these. However, all these accomplishments are merely obstacles in reaching god.

Now if you keep an idol in front of you and remember it or meditate then you can gain complete knowledge about that, meaning what material is it made of? Whose is it? Who has made it? Is it beautiful or ugly? Similarly, we will gain

knowledge about the idol and the art behind it, not of god.

Elements like the sun, the moon and other natural substances remind us of their creator, the almighty; but an idol can only take us to the sculptor. The manmade inventions of the present scientific world are also results of self-restraint, the difference is just in the type. But we are so unfortunate that in spite of having gems like yoga, we are deprived of worldly and otherworldly progress. Yoga is such a gem in the knowledge pool of the Hindu community that if we had not forgotten its teachings, trapped in the illusion of idol worship, then it would be on the pinnacle of success by virtue of the wholesome knowledge. Present scientific discoveries are ordinary for yogis, which they did not only consider inferior in front of god but also consider obstructive in the path to attain god. Permanent happiness can be attained not only through concentration of the mind, other subjects can also stabilize the mind for a moment. Whatever momentary happiness we experience, is not actually attained because of the subject, rather the root cause is concentration of the mind; this concentration is also not a reason for permanent pleasure. The source of permanent happiness and pleasure is only god. Therefore as long as man's mind is trapped in worldly substances, no matter if they are components of yoga, happiness cannot be attained. Therefore these components are also said to be obstructive in the path to attain god. When these components themselves are obstructive, then how can idol worship even be related! 'Idol' has not been accounted for by any historical translator of yoga among the objects of belief, nor have they hinted towards idol worship in any way. This is an imagination for which there exists neither a reason nor an evidence.

If the concept of yoga has disappeared from the world today, then its entire responsibility rests on idol worship and its propagators. If mankind has turned away from god and is moving in the flow of materialism, then those people are responsible for it who committed atrocities on the science of yoga for their selfish motives. Had we not buried this unprecedented science then the world would have looked completely different. People in the west are still mesmerized in the name of yoga. Yoga finds special attraction among the Americans amidst all the dazzle of this materialistic world. But yoga has today disappeared from its birthplace, India itself. Then who would give its functional message to these countries? Idol cannot be a means for concentration of the mind, let us give it a thought from a psychological perspective as well. Mind, by virtue of its tendency, keeps roaming from one place to another unstably. In order to eliminate this fickleness it should practise becoming stable at one place. That

place has to be so subtle, or should be made subtle gradually so that the mind does not get a chance to wander.

Mesmerism, which is a different form of yoga, practisers keep making a round dot smaller. It is till the extent that it becomes an extremely subtle dot and that too is removed at the end. The conclusion is that the tiniest of tiny objects is required for concentration of the mind so that it does not get a chance to wander here and there. But practising with the help of an idol not just makes our aim difficult to achieve but impossible. As soon as you come in front of an idol, your mind begins to wander amongst its various body parts, its beautiful clothes and ornaments. If the basis of that idol is some historical or imaginary person, then the mind gets trapped in the memories of the person's history or story. This is how the worshipper gets farther from his objective instead of going closer to it. Therefore, it is the duty of the thinkers and well wishers of the country and community that they try opposing this severe religious wrong practice and promote ancient yoga instead, which is the compilation of the worshipping techniques for everyone, from a commoner to the greatest scientist. They should also take the initiative of removing the inappropriate and selfish efforts taken to establish the relation of idol worship and yoga.

Chapter 14

Review of Doubts on Idol Worship

The unconditional supporters of idol worship do not get involved in the debate regarding when did idol worship begin or who began it, whether the scriptures support it or not; they instead give various reasons supporting idol worship. Among the idol worshippers is a huge population of people who are traditionally devoted to idol worship. You can call it blind faith if you wish. But this is what they believe. They worship idols with full dedication and belief. They are not concerned about whether the idol is that of god, or has attained some divine power through dignity. They are not especially concerned about which god or incarnation the idol belongs to. They are not even worried about finding out whether the idol is capable of listening to their prayers. They consider worshipping it as equivalent to worshipping god. If you try questioning them regarding this, they will try to avoid getting involved in any such debate. They believe or it can be said that they are made to believe that rationale and wisdom are not related to religion. Ritual and reason are two opposing virtues in their opinion which cannot reside together. Therefore they do not want to hurt their well-balanced devotional sentiments by getting involved in arguments.

They are satisfied with whatever their ancestors have been doing customarily. If you try to exchange too many views on this topic with them, then they will easily accept their inadmissibility. These gentlemen have a condition similar to those people who are wandering in darkness and are satisfied with it. Popular visionary of Arya Samaj, Pundit Gaganprasad Upadhyay has written a beautiful piece with regards to such people-

“He is in the dark and wishes to remain in the dark. He does not want light. If you throw any beam of light upon him by interrogation, he resents it and shudders at it. He feels that mental analysis might make him a renegade and therefore he avoids it. Not that he cannot reason. Among idolaters you find best lawyers whose legal acumen is awe-inspiring; Professors of logic whose fallacy detecting capacity is unquestionable; Shrewd politicians who clearly see the invisible forces working in the domain of world politics; traders from whose

keen eye no corner of the world market is hidden; financiers who can successfully combat the dodges of exploiters; astronomers whose knowledge of the heavenly bodies is much more clear than of their own house; and mathematicians well-versed in the intricacies of mathematical calculations. They are all intellectuals and you will find them worshipping in temples as devoutly as their uneducated brothers and sisters- side by side with them, and as vaguely too.”

The above citation accurately portrays the mentality of such people. Among the idol worshippers you will also find people who keep giving dry philosophical sayings in favor of idol worship. But the same people can be found worshipping in temples – in the exact same way as the common people. All their reasoning and logic is limited to sayings only; in terms of activities there is no difference between them and ordinary idol devotees. Their job is just to sit idle and weave a web of arguments, using which they make fruitless attempts to give idol worship a philosophical angle.

There are some people in the above category, who present such meaningless statements out of selfishness, in spite of understanding the flaws of idol worship. They sometimes accept it too but are forced by circumstances. This chapter will throw light on a few such arguments.

(1)

“The god is infinite but we are finite. Mortal beings are incapable of understanding the actual form of the immortal god. We bring it within a limited category with the help of idols so that we can feel it a bit.”

The god who is endless will always remain endless. The mere imagination of confining it within an idol is humorous. Knowledge is knowing and accepting something like it is. Anything else is opposite of knowledge. The meaning of prayer is the search for that infinite. We can gain knowledge about the idol in front of us with the help of an idol, not of the endless almighty. It is a misconception that we experience that infinite through idols. Finally an idol worshipper stays a worshipper of idols always; no one has been seen moving a step ahead.

Saying that “mortal beings cannot attain the absolute knowledge of god” is a web of words. It is also false that “the infinite almighty will become finite if the finite being knows him”. Understanding that “god is infinite” is the complete

knowledge of his endlessness. A bird flies with the intention of finding the end of the sky, but when it does not find it and gets tired, it assumes that it is infinite. Similarly, when living beings get tired on not being able to find the end of the almighty, they experience its endlessness. This is the equivalent knowledge of the infinite god. The motive of prayer is to know and understand god. Its aim is never that we know everything related to god. We only have to obtain knowledge that is expected for the progress of life; complete knowledge of god can neither be obtained nor needed. It is a great sin to discourage people by instilling in them false feelings like the god is infinite, and therefore we cannot understand it ever. We can know that almighty both through physical and mental strength. Thus if it is untrue on one hand that we cannot know anything about it, on the other hand it is also true that we can know everything about it.

(2)

“God is void of any form and we cannot see the formless. Thus we make an idol of it, in order to satisfy our longing for sight.”

When the god is formless then how can an idol having a form be made? Only an object with a form can have a picture or an image. Anything that we can see is one having a form. Therefore the image that we see is of an idol, not of god. The shape, size and color we see are of the idol, not of god. Therefore sight of idol will always remain the sight of idol, not that of god. People who visit idols and assume they have experienced god are in severe darkness. Wherever Theology has described visiting god, the word visiting or viewing means viewing through the eyes of the mind, meaning introspection; not viewing through the literal eyes. It is sad and surprising that man is desperate about seeing god whom he cannot see with his eyes, and wants to hear whom he cannot hear with his ears. Upanishads clearly declare it as “अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं”, meaning ‘it is not a subject of touch, words, form and nor can it be classified’. Different communities of human society have created illusions regarding meeting god. There are multiple stories in the Puranas in which god is said to have been seen by devotees as a body. There is no dearth of such stories in regarding sages. The so called devotee is adamant that he will see god in a bodily form; god had to be visible to him out of compulsion, etc. Similarly, the Quran has an episode of Prophet Muhammad riding a horse, going to heaven and conversing with god. But all these are mere imaginations and a result of not understanding the actuality of god. A lot of people trapped in these illusions and are robbed by

selfish people. When we close our eyes and stop viewing the outside world, the viewing capability of our eyes remains intact even then and their direction becomes inward. With continuous practice, man can see a dim light within himself. Communal people term this as divine light and deceit people. Similarly, when we close our eyes with our fingers or with cotton, we stop hearing outer voices and begin hearing heavenly voices. These too are termed as the words of god and given various names like ‘immeasurable’ etc. But those images and words are both artificial. Calling them divine is making mankind digress from their path. There is similar ignorance prevalent regarding dreams also. When someone sees a picture or an idol in front of him continuously then a shadow like image is seen in front of him and he can see it in subconscious state as well. Sometimes the brain can also feel it in a conscious state, as a result of distraction due to too much practice. People term this too as god or his form visiting man, but all this is a myth. As long as the actual form of god is not promoted among the common people, selfish and foolish people will keep promoting such mentality.

(3)

“It is true that idols are not forms of god, but even then they are needed and are appropriate for concentration of mind. The wandering mind can only become stable at an object, not a formless one. This is the reason why the Hindus build idols of Rama, Krishna etc. and worship them.” A lot has been written in this regard in the chapters ‘Idol Worship’ and ‘Yoga’. This feeling is totally baseless and false that mind cannot become stable in a formless object, and that an idol having a form is needed for that. All the objects have a form, taste, name, touch and odor and these worldly objects are also the reasons for the fickleness of the mind. If the mind stabilized in objects with a form, then everyone’s mind in the world would have stabilized, because the entire world has a form. But contrary to this, as man gets trapped in worldly substances, his fickle mindedness keeps growing. The fickleness of the mind disappears only when it is void of any subject and thinks of god. Therefore an idol can never be the cause for stabilizing the mind. Worshippers of idols imagine all topics while looking at the idol. Form is present in it as it is a permanent part of it. When something is offered then even ‘taste’ is imagined of. Flowers and incense sticks mean accepting the virtue of odor. Bowing to the idol, joining hands in front of it and reciting prayers are all sufficient to prove that the idolaters feel that the idol can

see and hear everything they do; therefore, how can something, due to which all subjects have been imagined, be the means of the mind's concentration?

When great men like Rama and Krishna etc., whom people consider incarnation of god by mistake, were alive they too worshipped the formless god through prayers. They were incapable of keeping their near and dear ones away from fickle mindedness. Rama himself had become impatient due to separation from Sita. Arjuna could not pacify his mind in spite of Lord Krishna being present there and Arjuna could see him. The Yadavas constantly met and saw Krishna, but still got destroyed. Then who can believe that seeing, touching and praying to an idol leads to self-regeneration. Arjuna has said in the Gita, addressing Krishna that-

चंचलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् । ३४, अ. ६

‘Oh Krishna! The mind is definitely fickle. It affects the body and the senses. It is really powerful and determined. Abstinence from it is very difficult in my opinion, just like air.’ Lord Krishna does not reply that I am present in front of you, stabilize your mind with my help, fickleness will disappear. Instead he says that-

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन च कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च ब्रह्मते ॥

‘Oh mighty Arjuna! There is no doubt that the mind can be controlled with great difficulty by virtue of its fickleness. However, it can be controlled through practice and asceticism.’ When Arjuna's mind did not become stable in spite of being in the company of Krishna himself, then how can a simple idol calm the mind of its worshipper down?

(4)

“God's creation reminds us of its craftsman. Are idols not creations of god? Does viewing them with devotion not remind us of the omnipresent god and his glory?”

The element that the idol is made up of is undoubtedly a creation of god; but made by a sculptor, not god. Seeing an image or idol attracts our attention to its

craftsman who built it, not to the god who has created the beautiful colors used in the picture or the metal and stone which made the idol possible. There is a reason behind this. We praise an artist seeing a beautiful piece of art because he attempted to obtain the natural element, whose picture is it, as a resemblance. Otherwise, that picture cannot be prettier than the object that has been represented in it. Can a flower's image have the beauty of an actual flower? Never. Seeing a picture attracts our attention to its artist, not god.

In order to know god better we should observe his natural creations, which are not touched by man yet. Is the sky full of galaxies not sufficient to introduce his greatness? Are the sun, moon and the world etc. amazing creations not capable of making the creator known? Don't the beautiful trees and forests full of colorful flowers and mountains attract our attention towards their amazing creator? The truth is that the smallest of flowers is enough to remind us of god. But this is possible only when the eyes of our knowledge support our eyes.

The argument that seeing an idol introduces one to the omnipresent god's glory is completely baseless. Milk contains butter, but it is not visible to the naked eye. There is oil in seeds, but is that visible to anyone? The eyes can never obtain knowledge about the endless, seeing the inexhaustible. This requires the presence of eyes of knowledge. But that is possible only when our thoughts are directed inward. Idol worship leads all our tendencies outward; it can never provide knowledge about god. If someone wants to experience the majesty of that god, then they should have a look at sun which rises every day and lights up the world. If you are from the countryside, then you should observe the mustard fields loaded with flowers in the spring season. If you belong to a city, you should carefully observe the amazing shape and colors of the blossoming flowers in a garden. A twig holds the capability of displaying his endless magnificence. How can an ugly idol sculpted by an ordinary artist provide that knowledge?

(5)

“When god is omnipresent, then he resides in the idol as well. We do not worship the idol, but the god who resides inside it.”

The above statement is a mere saying. The behavior of an idol worshipper is completely opposite to this. It is true that god is in an idol too, by virtue of being omnipresent, but his presence does not make every finite mortal object worthy of worship. God resides in flowers, then why are they offered to idols? God is in

sandalwood, then why is it applied to the idols? God is in water, then why is it used to bathe the idol? God is in food, then why is it offered? God is in the hands, then why are hands joined and folded? Thus if the intention of a devotee was to pray to the omnipresent god residing in an idol, then he would not take help of all the above mentioned activities. He considers the idol as god and prays to it, not to the god inside it. Puranas gave birth to idol worship, but they themselves refute this argument every now and then. Look at the below shloka from Bhavishya Purana Chapter 7 –

वासुदेवाद्यतश्चापि रुद्रमाहात्म्यवर्णम् ।
रुद्राग्रे वासुदेवस्य कीर्तनं परिवर्णनम् ॥
दुर्गाग्रे शिवसूर्यस्य वैष्णवाख्यानमेव च ।
यः करोति विमूढात्मा गार्दभी योनिमावीशेत् ॥

The meaning is clear – ‘One who worships Shiva in front of Krishna’s idol and prays to Krishna while in front of Shiva, who prays to Shiva, Sun god or Vishnu in front of Durga goes to a foolish donkey.’ If the objective of idol worship was to worship the god residing in the idols, then the Puranas would not have prohibited praying to and worshipping one god in front of the other.

The aim of prayer is the meeting of soul and god. Yoga is another name for this conjunction. But unison can happen only when both are present. The god is definitely there in an idol, but not the devotee’s soul. Human heart is the only place where life and Brahma both are present. A creature can see Brahma truly only in this temple of the heart. The Vedas and Upanishads represent this fact –

वेनस्तत्पश्यन् मनसा गुहायाम् । यजु . ३२ । ८

Wise men see god in the heart.

तमात्मस्थमनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ।

- कठोपनिषद् , १२ पंचम वल्ली

The brave men who can see god residing within their soul achieve everlasting happiness, and the others do not.

(6)

Idol worship might not have any utility for the wise and learned, but it is needed for the common people. Educated Hindu youth is already being separated from god and religion due to the propagation of Western education and civilization. If idols and temple are removed, then the remaining devotion for god and religion among the Hindus will also get over and people will become atheists. Therefore it is necessary that idol worship is kept alive. Something is better than nothing.”

The argument or calling idol worship appropriate for common public and keeping it alive is a wrong thing. The appropriateness of this argument can only be accepted if it is right to not educate a foolish person and let him be ignorant or to not treat a patient and let him be ill. There is no influence of religious feelings among the common people. Man's religious tendencies are natural and inherent. If they are made aware of the true ritual of worshipping god, they can slowly attain the state of elevation. But the selfish interests of priests, clerics and many others are obstructive in this. These people try to keep others in darkness. The people are instructed to join their hands in front of an idol and offer offerings. This is what prayer is. Priests at pilgrimage places follow travelers for hundreds of miles for such intentions. Is this what is called religion for which idol worship needs to be kept alive? Can the Hindu society be protected only through such belief in god?

The aim of devotion and religion is to elevate human soul and wisdom. But idol worship is a ritual which aims at keeping the society ignorant. It makes the devotee superstitious and recreant. This is the reason why the priests are the superior, even after being in touch with idol worship and centuries of ignorance and darkness. One who causes great harm to others is causing harm to himself. He is travelling on a wrong path and is satisfied. He believes that he is worshipping god and spends his entire life in this blind faith. Actual harm caused by all this is to the commoners. The educated society can protect themselves from these priests with the help of their wisdom. But our uneducated stratum is being wronged by them. Is this the only utility of idol worship for them? Muslims and Christians do not worship idols. Is their common society atheist? The fact is that their theism is much better than that of the Hindus. Idol worship is atheism in itself. Therefore believing that theism can be kept alive through it is a second misconception. It is wrong to consider an idol as god and worship it in the presence of god, just like it is treason to accept the rule of another ruler and follow it in the presence of one regency. Atheism is another name for this

treason. If the educated youth is bored of religion and heading towards atheism today, then its main reason is this imaginary god and the rituals for worshipping it.

We have promoted the false and imaginary form of god, this is the fruit of it. We have described the harm caused by idol worship to the Hindu community at different instances in this book; therefore we do not want to repeat them here. It is right that something is better than nothing but it is also important to think about its appropriateness and inappropriateness! If something has undesirable consequences, then its absence is much better. One will not consume poison just because he does not have anything else to eat. And if he does that, then his death is guaranteed. Idol worship is a wrong path. We can never achieve the desired, walking on this path. It will always take us away from the directed destination.

(7)

“We might not consider the idol to be of god, but if we sense god in it we will definitely be blessed with the fruits. Man is rewarded as per his feelings. There is a saying too – if you believe it is god, else just a stone.”

There is a strange rationale about feelings among the Hindus which you can hear everywhere. ‘Emotion’ is accepting and knowing something as it is; otherwise is the lack of emotion. The reality of an object cannot be altered through feelings alone. If we believe that lime with water is milk, can we extract butter from it? Can sand taste sweet if we feel it is sugar? Similar, the feeling of fire in water cannot drive away the cold. Every person in the world feels like being happy, no one ever has feelings for sorrow, but people are still seen to be in sorrow. It is often seen that a lot of patients consume poison in place of their medicine, and die as a result. Their feeling was that of getting well, then why did they die? Qualities and defects of any object cannot be separated from it in spite of having the opposite feelings for it. A stone will remain a stone even after sensing it to be god. It can neither gain consciousness nor be capable of doing harm or benefit.

The destruction of hundreds of temples and idols in the country are live examples for this. Every Hindu felt that it was god, and would protect them; but the result turned out to be the opposite. Idols were destroyed, temples were robbed, and our plight is evident from history. Our belief did not help us at all.

(8)

“Idols might not be worshipped as god, but seeing the idols of calm and great men influences our mind and provides peace to our mind. This is the reason why feelings of devotion and dedication instill in us the moment we see a temple or an idol.”

Seeing an idol influences us instantly, only when we have some feelings associated to it beforehand. And these feelings can only exist when we have some prior knowledge, gained through reading or hearing. Devotion and lack of devotion are feelings that take birth from this knowledge. If our feelings are good we will view with devotion, and if they are not good faithlessness will take birth. The idols that are viewed with eyes full of devotion are seen with faithlessness and disgust by Muslims and Christians. If the mind were influenced by the mere sight of the idol, even the Muslims would be influenced. But this is not what happens. Feelings of devotion and faith towards temples and idols are created among the Hindu families since birth. Government gardens in cities have statues of British rulers. But no Hindu sees them and joins their hands or bows. Nor does his mind get filled with devotion and faith. If no feelings were instilled in the mind of a Hindu child, then he would have felt nothing other than remorse and disgust towards the huge idol of goddess Kali colored with the blood of speechless, innocent and helpless animals. Can the scary idol of Bhairava and the embarrassing shape of the Shiv Linga instill any feelings of devotion and reverence apart from fear and embarrassment? Therefore these are our observances which make us feel devotion and reverence on seeing an idol or a temple.

(9)

“Idol worship is worshipping our great ancestors. Is it a sin to even pray to great men? All the communities worship their ancestors in some way or the other. Such worship is prevalent among the Muslims and Christians as well. This proves that idol worship is engraved in human mind at its core and he cannot be completely separated from it.”

Before giving the above statement a thought, the meaning of the two words ‘idol’ and ‘worship’ should be properly understood. An object which has a form and shape is called an idol. It is of two types- living and non-living. All living organisms are living idols, and those without consciousness are inanimate idols. The meaning of worship is respect and honor. It also means right behavior and protection in behavioral aspect. Therefore when we say that mother, father and

teacher are to be worshipful or that they should be worshipped, then it means keeping them satisfied through food, water, clothing etc. and happy through service and obedience. But for an inanimate object, protecting it is worshipping it; not joining hands in front of it, praying to it or offering food because it can neither eat nor hear. Therefore worshipping an idol too, like any living thing, is an activity void of any sense. Hindus worship the Ganges, pray to it, offer milk to the water and contaminate it. They toss coins in the river when a train is crossing the bridge. But when there is a flood, this very Ganges floods their villages. The British did not worship it like the Hindus, but rather put it to good use by building canals and generating electricity, and as a result benefitted from it. So whom did the Ganges bless? Calling and considering the popular idol worship of the Hindus equivalent to worshipping our ancestors is either not understanding the difference between the two or a speech trick. It is no sin to respect ancestors or to behave appropriately with their idol or image. You can decorate your places with their pictures, keep their statues or place them in public places; so that they can remind of an ideal life and sermons and motivate to follow their footsteps. But it is ignorance and atheism to treat them like living objects – as if they were living – or considering the god and worshipping in place of god. Muslims kiss the black stone of Kaaba in spite of not believing in idol worship and respect it. The Arab Muslims were also idolaters, as has been written earlier. Bowing their heads during their ‘Namaz’ (Muslim prayer) proves that only the idol has been removed from in front of them, rest of the ritual stays the same. This is how their old customs are being carried forward in some way or the other in some way or the other. Similarly, they did not understand the question of life and death. They believe that the soul too lives with the body in the grave after death. This is why they pray to their graves. But in spite of all this, Muslims are monotheists and worship none other than one god.

Roman Catholic Christians worship Jesus and Mary but the Protestant Christians consider it against Christianity. Jesus has himself refuted idol worship. Some Europeans carried with them the ancient customs of worshipping idols and they promoted the worship of Jesus and his mother Mary, replacing other gods.

When impure beliefs find a way in the hearts of some person or community, then correcting them is no easy task. But what is wrong is wrong. Its flaws do not convert to virtues just because it is ancient. A disease’s dreadfulness does not lessen just because a lot of people are suffering from it. Such diseases are epidemics and should be eradicated as soon as possible. Europe, America and

other western countries have statues of their leaders in public places in their big cities. The way in which these were established is the appropriate respect for these great men. This custom of building statues for our leaders has become prevalent in our country too. But this is beneficial only in the situation when we put it to right use. If they too are misused like the idols of Rama, Krishna, etc. then it will only cause harm. This is the exact misuse that has been happening to the statues and memorial of Mahatma Gandhi, in spite of being against his wishes and principles. This is being done by his devotees, including great leaders since the beginning and needs to be stopped.

(10)

“When we come to remember great men on seeing their statues, then why god can’t be remembered on seeing the idols of Rama, Krishna etc. who are incarnations of god?”

It has been proved elsewhere in this book that neither does god incarnate nor is it needed. There is no harm in establishing idols of great people like Rama, Krishna etc. but it is hypocritical and ignorance to treat them like living people or mistaking them to be god. This only causes harm to the country and community, there is no benefit.

(11)

“Idol-worship is the first stair to attain god.”

This analogy is also misleading. Man keeps moving upwards, climbing stairs. But idol worship leads towards decline, like we have testified earlier. Apart from this, an idolater stays one forever. It is a different thing if his belief is somehow removed or gets ceases to exist on its own. Selfless service by living beings, respect for scholars and wise men and congregation etc. might be steps to attaining god but idol worship is a deep trench which leads mankind towards the abyss. This is a blind faith which makes the human heart of stone and his wisdom void of knowledge.

(12)

“It is a principle of the Vedas that the entire world is Brahma. When the entire world is Brahma, what is the harm in considering an idol Brahma again?”

The entire world is god – this principle is not that of a Vedas presenter. It

strongly propagates the difference between creature and god. Yes, Shri Shankaracharya is of this opinion and his own followers believe in the unison of living beings and Brahma. Shri Madhavacharya has strongly opposed this principle in his interpretation of the Vedas. This subject is not related to the subject present in front of us. If this principle is to be believed then there is no difference between the worshipper and the worshipped. Then who will be worshipped and why? The question of considering or not considering an idol as Brahma does not even arise. If the believers of this principle still feel the need for prayer then Shri Shankaracharya has himself refuted idol worship. Therefore this argument does not hold any importance either way.

(13)

“Just like we have imagined forms of alphabets for formless alphabets and just like we imagine the shapeless dot on math with a subtle dot, what is the harm if we imagine an idol having a form for the formless god?”

Imagination is needed in the absence or scarcity of something substantial. Alphabets with shapes are imagined to fill the empty spaces filled by the absence of formless alphabets and words. If our words could be heard everywhere and always then we would have neither needed to imagine alphabets nor writing. God is omnipresent and omniscient; therefore there is no question of imagining an alternative in its place. If it is said that imagination is needed just because it cannot be seen, then it can be said that not been seen does not prove the absence of something. The sky and the words can never be seen, but they are not absent. Among the object that is imagined and the one that is the subject of imagination, one has to be tangible. Language scientists know that alphabets are not idols of formless alphabets, but imagination of the shape of the lips while pronouncing them. The alphabets of all other languages are an evolved form of them. In this way, a dot would be considered similar to the dot used in math as long as it is as subtle as possible. A big round symbol would never be appropriate to be called or considered a dot. The huge shape of an elephant can be compared to a mountain, but it cannot be imagined with the help of a water body, although both have a form. Among god and a stone idol there is nothing without a form. Idols were not built keeping in mind the formless god in the first place. Instead, men were considered incarnations and idols were imagined. A word which does not have a shape cannot be seen but can be heard. A subject of the ears was made a subject for the eyes through imagination for the sake of convenience. But the

god who is not a subject of any sense, how can it be made a subject for comprehension by any sense? It is only a subject of experience.

(14)

“Time is formless, but in spite of that it can be known through a material clock. Similarly, god can be known through idol.”

Clock is an instrument using which we classify and measure time which is a result of the earth rotating once in front of the sun and gives rise to day and night. A clock is not an idol of time, nor can it give correct knowledge until it is calibrated as per sunrise and sunset. A non-functional clock cannot even measure time, and then it is too far-fetched to think of knowing time with the help of it. Therefore a clock can be somehow called an idol of the sun, since its working depends largely on the sun. but is never an idol of the formless time.

(15)

“Just like kids can learn about mountains and rivers from a map, an idol can help people learn about god.”

Mountains, rivers, earth etc. are all tangible objects. Map is a miniature version of them. It is not a false or impossible imagination. But the god is not tangible. In such a state, a picture or idol cannot be imagined.

(16)

“Words are formless but they can be given a form by saving in a gramophone record. Why can’t an idol for the formless god be made in the same way?”

Words always remain formless, whether they are spoken from the throat or using a sound box. The difference is in type only. Man pronounces them with the help of his vocal cords, whereas a gramophone does with the help of some instruments. But both of them are formless.

(17)

“When a piece of paper or metal has the picture of some king or emperor engraved on them, they become valuable. Similarly, an idol becomes sacred on considering it that of god.”

A currency note, bill or coin does not become valuable just because it has the

picture, seal or signature of some emperor. Their value depends on the reputation of the state. The state takes on the responsibility of paying that amount. This is the reason why the currency note has no value once the country changes, just like a trader's bills are reduced to pieces of papers when he becomes bankrupt. God is formless, and does not have any shape or idol. Therefore are the idol worshippers not punishable, in the same way as the ones who promote fake coins?

(18)

“Idol is the body of god, and the incarnate becomes happy on worshipping the body. Thus idol worship is right.”

The law calls “चेष्टेन्द्रियार्थाश्रयः शरीरम्” ॥ - the shelter of activity, senses, meaning as body. Idol has no qualities of a body. If it is argued that the universe has been called the body of god, and similarly an idol is also his body. But calling the universe the body of god is just a metaphor, not the truth. An idol does not become the god's body just by the mortal-immortal relation. Otherwise, even our bodies would be called the body of god. Then we could have worshipped our own bodies to please god, there was no need for idols. Else, all the substances are the bodies of god, the whole debate about idols is pointless.

(19)

“Just like the fire has a formless and a tangible form, the god too has a tangible and a formless form. This is why the formless god is worshipped without a form, and the other form of god is worshipped as a body. Idol worship is another name of worshipping the form.”

The natural form of fire is the one with a form. One with a natural tangible form cannot be formless ever. The scriptures have described two states of fire – one incredible, another ordinary. When the sparks of fire are separated they cannot be seen; but they can be seen when they are created as a result of rubbing. This does not mean that they are formless as they cannot be seen. Butter cannot be seen in milk, nor can oil be seen in sesame – but it appears on treating it rightly. This does not mean butter or oil did not exist earlier, and appeared later. If something is formless it will stay formless forever. Once again, two opposite qualities cannot reside in the same object, as has been written earlier. Therefore god should either be considered formless or not. If it is said that god is formless

but takes a form sometimes, then firstly a formless object can never take a form; even if we agree for a while, then god will no longer remain formless after taking a form and will become confined. Once god is confined, he will no longer be omnipresent or omniscient. Once he is not omnipresent and omniscient, he will not be the one who rewards, nor could he be capable of running the world as per rules. Then what do you mean by having a form? Does it begin to have a shape like inanimate objects? If this is true, then what is the difference between him and lifeless inanimate objects? It can be said that it remains formless like life but still takes on a body. Even then he will have to go through all the diseases that a body goes through, he will not remain free of flaws and diseases. The body is a reward of our deeds; therefore it can never become free of reward and punishment. In this state, he no longer remains god and becomes a creature. This is what actually happens on believing in incarnations. The meaning of worshipping the formless and the form is not what you believe it to be. Does the god not have any qualities because of being formless? The numbers of virtues present in a formless thing are not present in those which take a form. Life is formless; it has so many qualities and so much power! All the qualities are themselves formless. Thus an object does not possess qualities just because it has a shape. The fact is that when we remember and keep in mind the justice, benevolence, joy and other virtues of god, so that we can also imbibe them, then it is called worshipping the qualities. Similarly, we worship the formless when we instill in ourselves the immortal, infinite etc. qualities. The effect of this kind of worship is that the worshipper becomes free of qualities. If god is immortal, then he too becomes immortal. The worshipper does not gain anything, in fact loses just like it happens in worshipping the form. But this loss gives him peace and satisfaction. This feeling is clearly expressed in the following mantra of the Kathopnishad-

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथाअरसन्नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् ।
अनाद्यनन्तम्महत्ः परं ध्रुवम निचाय्य तन्मृत्यु मुखात्
प्रमुच्यते॥

Meaning, god cannot be spoken, not touched, not smelled, does not have a form, and is unavoidable, immortal, and infinite. In this way, man escapes from the shackles of death by gaining definite knowledge of the almighty.

(20)

“Girls play with dolls initially, but stop it after marriage. Similarly, we first worship idols and will abandon it once we find god.”

तुलसी प्रतिमा पूजिबौ , है गुड़ियन को खेल ।

जब पहुंचे ससुराल में देय पिटारे मेल ॥

Idol worship is considered the means to attaining god. But playing with dolls is not similar as it is not the means to get married. If this were true, all parents would be free of the concern of getting their daughters married. Doll games are a way of recreation for kids. Is idol worship also recreation? What can be said about the girl who has grown old but still plays with dolls? People grow old but do not abandon idol worship which is equivalent to playing with dolls. The fact is that valuable money and time of an idol worshipper gets spent in this game. This unfortunate person believes that he is going closer to god through this. A child finds the game of dolls a game, but even a grown up person finds idol worship is god worship. What can be said about this ignorance?

(21)

“Idol worship might not have any merits, but is at least a legacy of our ancestors that has been there for hundreds of years. Therefore there is no harm to keep it alive, as an ancient custom, if not as a religion.”

It has been proved at multiple places in this book that idol worship is not a blessing of our ancient sages and saints. It took birth in the era of the Puranas, after this country had half degenerated post Mahabharata. In spite of everything, any ritual is not worth following just because it has been going on for ages. We have to think about its merits and demerits. Any community, which sticks to a malpractice because his ancestors have been doing that, gets devastated soon. Just like it is necessary to uproot and throw away the weeds that grow near trees, it is also important to eradicate the malpractices in a society for its upliftment. We have thrown light on the harm caused by idol worship to Hindu community in this book. Keeping a malpractice alive which has hollowed the entire mental and social life, just because it has stuck to us like a leech for centuries, is equivalent to suicide.

(22)

“Idol worship is equivalent to the soul of the present Hindu community. It cannot be ended without severe revolution. But this creates the fear of strong upheaval among the community and mutual psychic. This will turn obstructive in the rise of the nation and organization. Therefore does not appear beneficial to say anything against idol worship at least in the present situation, even though it is harmful.”

There is no doubt in that idol worship is the lifeline of the ancient Hindu religion. The entire structure of Hinduism is built around it. It is also true that ending it would need a strong revolution. But no reformation can be halted just for the fear of revolution. Deadlier the disease, stronger should be the treatment. Treatment cannot be cancelled because the patient will be pained by surgery. We have proved earlier that idol worship has committed atrocities on the independence and organization of the Hindu community. A disease cannot be cured without removing the root cause. Similarly, as long as the root cause of dividing and subdividing the Hindu community, idol worship, is not ended, it is presumptuous to dream of Hindu unity and progress. Revolution can never be pleasant, whether it is political or religious. One has to go through tortures, atrocities and everything else. But revolution is a sign of life, it cannot be neglected. Neglecting religious and social reforms in the name of national independence is also short-sightedness. The root cause of India's dependence is not religious and social.

Some people propose that political reform comes first, religious and social come later. We ask them that how did they decide that people who control the regency are all reformers? Common people only elect the Vidhan Sabha (state assembly); As long as they are not reformed, it is impossible to elect representatives who are pro-reformation. This task has to be carried out still by those who experience the need for these reforms. Even the assemblies are afraid to interfere in reforms which are not approved by the masses. History stands testimony that in spite of controlling the regency, we could not keep it stable because of religious and social discords.

(23)

“There is no polytheism in Hinduism. If you stand beside any devotee in a temple and listen to his prayers, then you will know that he uses all the adjectives for god like formless for the idol.”

We have proved through multiple evidences that one community of Hindus does

not only prohibit worshipping the god worshipped by another community, but even criticizes it. Not just this, there are differences among the gods of the same community as well. Vaishnava community considers both Rama and Krishna as incarnations. But one group gives more importance to Rama and the other to Krishna, and both are not ready to worship each other's idols.

It is famous about Vaishnava Shri Goswami Tulsidas that when he came to Mathura then said on seeing the idol-

कहा कहीं छवि आज की , भले बने हौ नाथ ।
तुलसी मस्तक जब नवै , धनुष बाण लो हाथ ॥

He did not bow till the time Krishna's idol did not take Rama's form by taking a bow and arrow. The above incident might be completely untrue, but is sufficient to prove that there are differences present among the Vaishnavas.

“हस्तिनाताड्यमानोपि न गच्छेज्जनैर्मंदिरम् ॥ - do not go to a Jain temple in spite of an elephant attack. This popular saying is another live example. Hindu worshipper has firm belief in incarnation. Thus, if he sometimes includes adjectives for formless god in his prayers, then it does not prove that he is worshipping the formless god, and not the idol. He believes in both the aspects of god, the formless and the one who has a form. Therefore he includes the adjectives of formlessness in his prayers for idols. Apart from this, there are many stories in the Puranas which vividly describe gods and goddesses, their birth, marriage, childbirth and battles. It is delusive to say that Hinduism is not polytheistic, in the presence of these sagas.

(24)

“A tree is known by its fruits. When we see that there have been, or are many great people who believe in idol worship, whose ideal character and will power are worth imitating; then how can we agree that idol worship is a sin?”

Are the descriptions of the terrifying consequences given in this book not sufficient to familiarize this tree which has poisonous fruits? Which sin is not committed in the name of this? Our temples, pilgrimages, priests and Brahmins are all live examples of this. Which malpractice like lie, fraud, trick, and atrocity does not accompany this? Which creature has never been sacrificed in front of this demon, be it innocent helpless animals or humans? Even today, the killing of countless mute animals in the name of idol worship is a disgrace to a pious word

like 'prayer'. Immoral practices like the Devdasi tradition are fruits of this libertine tree! The intellectual, social and our centuries old political servitude all ill effects of idol worship.

If we carefully have a look at people who have become great in spite of believing in idol worship, then we will come to know that idol worship had no importance in their daily lives. They were not idol worshippers themselves, just believed in it. It might be either because it was traditional, or because they did not consider it especially harmful. Their entire life can be found filled with the rules and self-restraint. It has been written earlier that only the first two components of yoga – self-control and rules are enough to make a person great. Accomplishing the eight components lead a person to that state which is difficult to even imagine in this world today. Then these great men were not ancestors whose every activity is imitable. Apart from this, we have we have presented in this book many evidences of the Vedas and historical proofs from the Ramayana era till the Mahabharata era; and tried to determine that the greatness and splendor of the Arya community during that time was just a universal prevalence of worshipping the formless Brahma. It does not seem right to write more on what can be the importance of evidences of modern and astray great men in front of the evidences concerning ancient scriptures and ancestors. The analysis of idol worship through rationale by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, great social reformer of modern times Swami Dayanand and other Hindu saints are no less important.

Chapter 15

Methods of Worship

What should be our method of prayer in the absence of idol worship? This is a question which is often considered complex, or made complex and presented to the common people. We have tried to prove in this book that idol worship began after the Mahabharata era and it has no relation with our ancient Vedic religion or culture. When idol worship was not prevalent in this country, common people had a common all-rounder method of worship. Our scriptures and history throw apt light on this topic. Then why is this question considered complicated? It is clear that the supporters of idol worship want to keep it alive, behind this. It has been discussed more than necessary in the book that why do they wish to keep it alive.

There is no component of yoga that is beyond the reach of common man. But still, it cannot be denied that not everyone is capable of being a great follower of yoga, just like not every person is a scientist, litterateur or artist of the highest level. It is true that one gets rewarded as per the hard work they do. But every creature cannot remain uninfluenced by the environment he grew up in and its preconceptions. We cannot properly understand this abnormality of the world unless we understand that 'life' is the child of preconceptions of different lives. Therefore the need for a method of worship, which can lead every person to self-development along with material progress, is always experienced everywhere. Ancient Arya community was not unaware of this method. Our scriptures give a strong message for every man and woman, young and aware, to pray every morning and evening regularly. Our ancient history makes it evident, which we have proved as and when required. This practice has not disappeared even today, after the prevalence of idol worship. But it has changed slightly in form over time.

This practice of worship is structured based on the yoga. Everyone can, if they want and as per their interest, use it to move forward towards self-development and finally to the state of enlightenment. the entire method, involving breathing exercises, enchanting mantras and taking a dip is very simple and

comprehensible. Every educated person can perform them with some effort and practice. But the question of appropriate worship technique for the illiterate masses still remains, whose population is unfortunately around 80 percent in this country today. As is mentioned earlier, yoga describes a common method for every class of people alike, whether they are scholarly or undisciplined, literate or illiterate. There is a simple trick of enchanting 'Om' given by yoga for the uneducated - तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् । Enchanting 'Om' and thinking about its meaning is extremely simple, which the children and elderly, educated and uneducated all can equally benefit from. Similarly, the Gayatri mantra can be enchanted, with meaning, and practiced with some effort. Gayatri mantra has great importance in our religion just like 'Om' enchanting. Enchanting mantras is also a means of concentration of the mind. Therefore ordinary educated people can take appropriate advantage from it.

What is especially needed regarding enchanting is 'thought to meaning' which has been forgotten by everyone unfortunately. A Hindu believes that enchanting mantras alone, even without knowing meaning, eradicates his sins. But we cannot fully benefit from mantras till the time we do not understand the meaning, nor can our thoughts be influenced by that. The aim of enchanting is the purity of thoughts and the concentration of the mind. If it cannot fulfill both of these then its importance is no more than a parrot's rote chant. Therefore meaning and thought are important along with enchanting.

Arya religion instructs every human being to the continuous ritual of five yajnas. Brahma yajna is one of these. Meditation, enchanting, introspection and discourse – all fall under this. Therefore it is required of everyone that they constantly practice morning and evening prayer, enchant mantras, study scriptures like Vedas religiously and giving others whatever knowledge one has gained. But on one hand prayer has been replaced by idol worship among the Hindu community, whereas on the other hand self-knowledge has either disappeared or replaced by Ramayana, Bhagwat etc. scriptures; and the knowledge of Vedas, *Smriti* and other scriptures has almost disappeared. The religious knowledge of the common people is nothing more than the stories of Rama and Krishna. Another reason for this is that the right to study the Vedas in ancient times was restricted to the Brahmins only. There was no such restriction for studying the Vedas during the Vedic period. In such a condition, it is not surprising that religious literature of the highest level like the Vedas etc. is no longer related to common people. Hindu community today is hardly aware of its

ancient religious literature. Its knowledge is limited to a few historical stories and epics. Therefore in order to revive the Arya religion, it is very much needed that we instill among Hindus an interest for their ancient religious literature once again.

Among the five yajnas, the second is 'Dev-yajna' which is known as offering prayers to god in front of fire. This too holds an important position in the life of an Arya. There is the ritual of performing it every morning and evening, like we have described earlier. These two kinds of prayers had an important place in our daily routine till the Mahabharata era. The decline of these methods began with our decline. During the Ramayana, Rama had to fight fierce battles in order to protect these yajnas. But blood and flesh which were considered unholy began to be offered to the fire as animal sacrifice. It began to be considered right to even sacrifice helpful and innocent animals like the cow. As a result, holy religious acts like the yajna were abandoned during the Buddhism era because of these flaws. Worshipping god is another name for yajna. It is not surprising that god-worship became synonymous with idol worship. Today if you ask any Hindu the meaning of praying to god he would immediately reply that it refers to worshipping the idols placed in temples. Similarly, words like temple (abode of god) etc. were used for yajna-halls in the ancient times. But today we get surprised on seeing these words and feel that idol worship was prevalent even then. The word temple has become a dogma now, whose meaning has become synonymous with idol worship. The construction of a Shiva temple is the same as that of a yajna-hall. The word *mandap* (open hall) is still used for it in the province of Bombay. Shiva temples are made quadrilateral or octagonal everywhere. Its peak is comparable to the peak of the fire of yajna. It is not surprising that in some leftist era, these yajna halls were converted to Shiva temples. Some scholars are of this opinion. In the middle of a Shiva temple, the Shiva linga is placed in the middle of a circular altar. They say about it that it is the stage where the fire was lit. Thus it is not just an assumption but something factual in the assumption that idol worship took birth from the remains of the ancient Vedic yajna ritual. Evening prayer in a religious act performed individually, whereas yajna is a constant routine act performed in masses. Arya ritual is that every householder performs the fire prayer every morning and evening together with his family. Similarly, there was the tradition of performing such prayers in masses and socially after the completion of a fortnight, month, quarter and half year till the time of Mahabharata. Festivals like Diwali (winter half-yearly), Holi (summer half-yearly) are all adaptations of such yajnas.

Similarly the important full moon nights of the Hindu months of *Aashadha*, *Kartika*, and *Falgun* are reminiscent of the quarterly yajnas. Yajnas like *Ashwamedha*, *Gomedha* etc. have a national character. The importance and prevalence of fire at that time was so much in this country that every holy occasion was begun with lighting the fire. The primacy of praying to the fire remains a ritual even today and reminds us of those times. Worshipping the fire purifies and refines the five elements – sky, fire, air, water and earth. This is worshipping these elements and is therefore named as god-prayer. When the atmosphere is pure, we are instantly protected from multiple contagious diseases. It is indisputable that praying through fire has an amazing influence on our mind and health. Every person can experience this through some effort and expense.

Arya community has moved far away from its culture and tradition. But its buds are still present as seeds. The need is for some leadership and guidance. The community was being misguided by several religions for thousands of years. Many mischiefs and malpractices found their way into it in the name of religion. However, Vedic emotions similar to the fire under the ashes have not completely disappeared. If the steersmen of the Hindu community rise above selfishness and wish to rekindle that divine fire, then it still holds the capability of glowing once again and lighting up the world. This community has seen many bad times, but even then its ancient glory never completely became extinct. It is still an owner of many precious gems in spite of being poor and can still give something to the world. Will we offer some self-sacrifice for its sake?